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**p44**

Three all-day  
adventure bikes  
tested



**p72**

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with a canister.  
It's a gas!



**p40**

Seven of the best  
portable locks



**p78** 'I lost six  
stone and went  
from fat to fast'

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# THIS MONTH

April ISSUE 70

## DO THIS...

### Head for the hills

**There's nothing better than playing in the mountains**

There's no question that our photo shows cycling in the high country during one of its most romantic moments. But whether it's sunny or snow-covered, or even drizzly and sombre, there are few views as atmospheric as those you'll find among Britain's hillier areas. It's not only a matter of visuals, either: there's the smell of clear, fresh air and — if you pick your route wisely — nature's own soundtrack, with motor traffic banished.

Those sensations are some of the short-term rewards you receive for the effort and time you spent riding to these heights. The other reward may take a little longer to appreciate, but it's just as real. Even spending just one day cycling up slopes will bring on

your form more than you can imagine. You'll learn a great deal about your body and you'll discover there is a technique to conquering climbs, beyond just going full speed.

Though some cyclists wax lyrical about famous continental cols, we're not short of some cracking hill riding right here in Britain. From the rolling landscape of the Yorkshire Dales to the more extreme mountains of the Scottish Highlands, there's of plenty climbing to be had. And Welsh roads in Snowdonia aren't just undulating, they're often beautifully smooth as well.

So, this month, aim high and soon you'll find yourself standing on the shoulders of giants.

#### Useful links

**Snowdonia**  
[www.visitsnowdonia.info](http://www.visitsnowdonia.info)

**Peak District**  
[www.peakdistrict.gov.uk](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk)

**Yorkshire Dales**  
[www.yorkshiredales.org.uk](http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk)

**Lake District**  
[www.lakedistrict.gov.uk](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk)

**Scottish Highlands**  
[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)

#### Our picture

We took to the whitewashed wonderland of this year's Etape du Dales route. Starting from the picturesque village of Grassington in the Yorkshire Dales, the event takes on classic climbs seen in last year's visit of the Tour de France.









- Easy way to fit some exercise into daily routine
- Better concentration when you arrive at work
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IN

### Big Pedal

The national scheme to get children and parents cycling to school runs from March 2-20 (see page 18)



### Adventure bikes

We've been out on 26in and 29in-wheeled adventure bikes this month — perfect for snow, sand, wind, rain or even a bit of sun (page 44).

### Upgrading

Time to start fettling and tweaking your old faithful.

### Colours

We've been told that soon to be revealed new road bikes from B'Twin will join the current trend for more vibrant paintjobs.



### HGVs

More than 1,000 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued to unsafe HGVs in London since October 2013.

### Old underlayers

They're not that expensive — if yours are smelly, holey or simply tired, just go and buy yourself some new ones.

### Electronic shifting

Is it just us, or has news about electronic shifting gone a bit quiet lately?

### New Forest cycling

Cycling organisations have rallied against a 'discriminatory' proposed charter governing bike events held in the Forest (see page 16 for full story).



OUT

# A golden age for real riders

**We've never been ones to moan here at CA — riding a bike is too much fun. But we think for everyday and leisure cyclists, there are some other good reasons to feel happy**

## Cycling and walking strategy

Perhaps the greatest single political step for cycling in recent history took place on January 27 when Parliament approved the government's amendment to introduce a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy as part of the Infrastructure Bill. And while it might not seem sexy, headline-grabbing news, it means that a Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy now has to be written into law, with specific objectives, funding to achieve those objectives, and it has to be reviewed at least once every five years.

## Clubs burgeoning

Cycling organisations have never been in such rude health. Both CTC — with 68,000 members — and British Cycling — with 103,000 members — are boasting incredible figures. That's great, not least because it gives both organisations more clout when trying to ensure cyclists' voices are heard. But that's not all — there are currently more than 1,800 bike clubs across Britain, meaning more choice than ever if you want to take your cycling to a new level socially or competitively.

## Vote with your pedals

A recent YouGov poll revealed that cycling could have a major impact on the coming election. While

more than half of people surveyed (55 per cent) in a recent YouGov poll support government investment in cycling, most interesting was the revelation that 27 per cent of people would think more positively of an electoral candidate who campaigned for cycling. In a separate YouGov survey carried out in nine English cities, that figure rose to 46 per cent approval for candidates who support cycling. That's the kind of statistic that will get prospective MPs thinking — even if only as a quick vote-winner.

## Good routes a go-go

In London, work will begin next month on two new east-west and north-south Cycle Superhighway routes, dubbed 'Crossrail for Bikes'. The north-south route runs from Kings Cross to Elephant and Castle, while the east-west route runs from Tower Bridge to Paddington via Embankment, Parliament Square and Hyde Park. CTC said these represent "a game-changer for cycling" in the capital.

But don't think these great routes are all brand new or on the way. Over the last 20 years, sustainable transport charity Sustrans has created the incredible National Cycle Network, offering low-traffic cycle routes across the country.

See how we enjoyed Sustrans's 20 best British rides on page 114.



There are now more than 1,800 cycling clubs across the country



**170,000** Number of cycle journeys each day in London's congestion charge zone — putting it on a par with the city of Copenhagen.



## Help4Heroes

This year's Cycle 4 Heroes event will take place on Armed Forces Day, June 27.

[www.icycleevents.co.uk/cycle-4-heroes](http://www.icycleevents.co.uk/cycle-4-heroes)

## RIDE TO LIVE

**I didn't ride Ride London in 2013 but I was there at the finish supporting our Beating Bowel Cancer team.** I was chatting to Christian, who has advanced bowel cancer — in fact, he had tumours removed from his lungs that year — but he'd just completed the 100-mile cycle ride. We had the finance director of BP riding for us as well, and he turned to me and said: "You next year, matey." With Christian standing next to me I had to say, "Yes, of course."

**I hadn't been on a road bike in my life** — I'd had a mountain bike, but I hadn't been on that for a long time. I did my first road ride on April 27 last year — 6.3 miles at an average speed of 9.5mph.

**I did some rides on my own, then I joined Woking CC in June.** My first club ride was June 6. It was 45 miles but I loved it. Joining Woking has transformed me. My other half said to me: "Taking up cycling and joining that club is the best thing you've done since I've known you." I think that's a kind of a backhanded compliment! But without the club's support I'd never have done the training for RideLondon.

**I won't say I enjoyed that RideLondon experience last year** — we pretty much swam round the course. It was a bit like childbirth, I'm told: you just about get through it, then you want to do it again. But I averaged 15.4mph. This shows the transformation in me — when they took the hills out, I was really gutted. I'd trained on those hills, I'd done Leith Hill four or five times, I'd done Box Hill and Newlands too many times to count.

**I've become a cycle bore.** I'm very easy to buy for at Christmas. And I've got a social life round the club as well. Now I'm a cyclist who runs a charity rather than a charity exec who does cycling.

**If anyone wants to join Beating Bowel Cancer's team for Ride London 2015, they should contact the charity's fundraising team at [www.beatingbowelcancer.org](http://www.beatingbowelcancer.org).**

# Mark Flannagan

**Job: CEO Beating Bowel Cancer**

**Age: 52**

**Bike: Giant Defy 1**

**Lives: Woking, Surrey**



Photos: Roo Fowler, Yuzuru Sunada

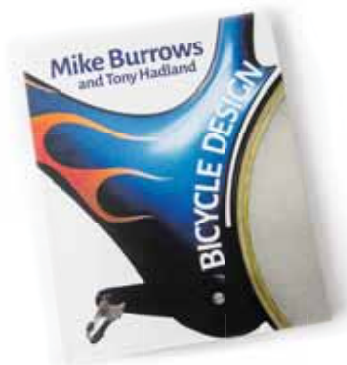




### Activbod range from £12

This new range of health and skincare products from Activbod is formulated with the energetic person in mind. We've been getting particularly sweaty on the turbo-trainer this month and the Pick Me Up Scrub leaves you fresh as a daisy. Great smelling pre, during and post exercise products are also available from this brand.

[www.activbod.co.uk](http://www.activbod.co.uk)



### Bicycle Design by Mike Burrows £14.99

For anybody who wants to know how and why their bike works the way it does — and perhaps inform themselves a little about manufacturers' marketing claims — *Bicycle Design* by legendary designer Mike Burrows is a must-read. Chapters include handling, materials, aerodynamics, transmission, wheels, and even lubrication.

[www.snowbooks.co.uk](http://www.snowbooks.co.uk)



### Rapha Classic wind jacket £140

Fresh from the classy British brand are these Classic wind jackets in a brand new colour range. Available in cuts for men and women the stand-out hues will help you to be seen, while staying stylish. Formerly known as the Stowaway, these shells contain all the key signature features including reflective details, windproofing, water resistance and lightweight fabric.

[www.rapha.cc](http://www.rapha.cc)



### Saris Show Off £240

Next month we'll be bringing you 11 of the best bike storage solutions, but we couldn't resist giving you a sneak peek at the Show Off. Why not put your pride and joy on the wall in your home and make a show of it? This product from Saris holds a bike up to 30lb and features a remote-controlled, battery operated LED light that shines down on your bike. Pricy, but ever so cool.

[www.paligap.co](http://www.paligap.co)



### SiS Rego Mint Chocolate Protein Bar £1.99

We know that Science in Sport produces highly technical nutrition products that really work on and off the bike, but now it has gone even further and come up with something that tastes like mint choc chip ice cream (in our opinion). Not only is this a real treat for the taste buds, it will aid recovery, containing 20g of protein, 6.5g of fat and 20g carbohydrate. Nice.

[www.scienceinsport.com](http://www.scienceinsport.com)



### Giro Alpineduro £149.99

What's this? A hiking boot in *Cycling Active*? Don't worry, we haven't turned into *Country Walking*. Despite its rugged appearance this is actually the Alpineduro cycling boot from Giro — look closely and you'll see mounts for SPD cleats. It comes with a Vibram Ictrek rubber sole, insulated build, and waterproof microfibre upper.

[www.zyro.co.uk](http://www.zyro.co.uk)



### Mini Pro saddlebag £16.99

One of those essential bits of kit, your saddlebag is ultimately your bike's first-aid box in case of an emergency, and your cashpoint at the cafe stop. This bijou, beautifully simple offering from Pro is quick and easy to fit and remove with its Velcro straps, and is made from water-resistant material with reflective details.

[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



### Topeak Transformer X pump £89.99

This truly is a veritable 'pump in disguise' — the Transformer isn't just a fully fledged bike pump but also features a handy built-in bike stand. It'll hit 160psi no bother, is made from top-quality materials and, if you're old enough to remember Transformer toys first time round, you'll no doubt be glad of the easy-to-read pressure gauge.

[www.extrauk.co.uk](http://www.extrauk.co.uk)



### Madison Isolator Merino base layer £44.99

If you're in the market for a long-sleeve base layer — and Lord knows we can all do with one at the moment — this plush option from Madison is a real treat. The 100 per cent Merino construction will wick away sweat and keep you warm, while its casual cut and reflective detailing means you could wear it on its own without looking like you're in your vest.

[www.madison.co.uk](http://www.madison.co.uk)



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## Lead on!

Sky Ride is looking for Ride Leaders — go to the website to find your nearest training course. [www.goskyride.com](http://www.goskyride.com)

# 14%

People who say they don't feel safe driving their own car. Well that's reassuring, huh?



# Moderation is key

## Research shows too much exercise is as harmful as too little

We all cycle for different reasons, but if the inspiration for taking to your saddle is health and putting off the moment when you meet your maker, a recent study looking at joggers' habits and mortality rates should be of interest.

The Copenhagen city heart study led by Peter Schnohr at Frederiksberg Hospital, Denmark, followed 1,098 healthy joggers and 3,950 non-joggers over 12 years to investigate how different running habits affected their long-term health. To cut to the chase, the research showed that those participants who jogged for a total of one to 2.4

hours a week at a gentle or moderate pace, preferably over three different sessions, had the lowest mortality.

Obviously sedentary pie-stuffing face-fillers don't fare well, but particularly interesting is that the study also showed those who took part in very strenuous exercise had almost the same mortality rate as people who did no exercise.

National guidelines recommend everyone does 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week. And CA recommends you think very seriously about jogging — it'll knacker your knees.

## MONTH IN NUMBERS

# 68

The number of workers at Campagnolo's Vicenza factory who were threatened with being laid off following restructuring plans. However, following a strike by Campag employees, the redundancies were suspended.



## Eddy70

With five-time Tour de France winner Eddy Merckx's 70th birthday happening this year, Merckx bikes has launched a commemorative model. The steel-framed Eddy70 weighs 7.5kg, costs €14,000 (£10,400), and will be limited to 70 editions.

# 10%

Cycling levels in London from September 14, 2014 to December 6, 2014 were up 10 per cent on the same period in 2013, and were the highest since records began in 2000.

## Bikelock Holmes

### What your bike says about you



**W**ell here's a sporty little number, and I approve of Mr Greenhalgh's choice of colour scheme. Readers will not be surprised to learn that I see most of the world in black and white, with the occasional dash of fiery red passion. Indeed, the sight of this machine reminds me that last month I was rather dismissive about time trialling, but do

not think me unsympathetic to competition in general. My problem — as Watson will attest — is that I always demand to come first, which often leaves the good doctor feeling under pressure to repress his desire for conquest.

That can lead to trouble, not least last week when Watson initially refused to support me in person at our club — the Nodder Street Hard Riders — track championships.



And I have to say I felt out of sorts without my companion there for encouragement. I scraped through to the penultimate round of the pursuit, but even the inspiring sight of our female contingent racing round on bare boards did little to encourage me beyond the semis. Thankfully, to my surprise and delight, Watson gave me the moral support I needed.

I went into the final against a thrusting young Turk, but from the start I had the upper hand. Watson's exhortations stiffened my sinews and I quickly gained ground. With just a lap remaining, Watson hollered me towards one final lunge. With his encouragement I rose to the occasion and took the chap by surprise with a stunning last-minute show of strength. Truly, it's one of the joys of cycling to snatch a late victory.

**Thick-skinned? Send us a photo of your bike if you want the Bikelock treatment to... [cyclingactive@ipcmedia.com](mailto:cyclingactive@ipcmedia.com)**



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# Cycles for the super-rich

Learjet-loads of the world's most moneyed cyclists will swoop into Monte Carlo over the Easter weekend for the LikeBike show, an exhibition of extravagant bikery designed to prise open the Gucci hand/manbags of those for whom money is no object. Here, CA gawks agape at 10 of the show's priciest bikes. [www.likebikemc.com](http://www.likebikemc.com)



## £2,990 **BESV** Lion LX1

This sexily sculpted e-bike is more than just a pretty frame; its integrated computer monitors your pedalling input and calculates how much electronic assistance you need to heave along its 28.5kg, adjusting power accordingly. The battery has a claimed range of 80km. [www.besv.com](http://www.besv.com)



## £33,659 **Moynat** Malle Bicyclette

If you're a member of the top one per cent, you need capacious luggage to carry your weighty wedge. Spending £34k on a shopping bike is doubly helpful: it gets you a posh Moynat trunk and leaves you with a slightly slimmer wad to lug around. Made to order, naturally. [www.moynat.com](http://www.moynat.com)



## £9,691 **Nevi** Spinax

OK, we have to admit to a moment of weakness with this one; we couldn't help but feel a pang of desire for its sexy satin-finished, gold-etched titanium frame. It's a beautifully made thing. Almost worth remortgaging the house to buy a matching pair for the living room wall. [www.nevi.it](http://www.nevi.it)



## £8,975 **SPA** Bicicletto

Arguably more a motorcycle than it is a bicycle, the Bicicletto has an electric motor and is built in the style of a Sixties cafe racer. Trouble is, though it costs as much as a brand new Fiesta, you may find it tricky to pitch as a practical alternative to the family car. [www.societapiemonteseautomobili.com](http://www.societapiemonteseautomobili.com)



## £13,389 **T°Red** Bestianera Montecarlo Edition

This really is the ultimate bike for the lazy loaded. Though it may look like a sleek sports machine designed for an elite athlete, it actually has an electrical motor built into the hub. [www.labestianera.com](http://www.labestianera.com)



## £5,235 **Rotwild** R.E1+FS27.5

When you've already got a Ferrari, a Rolex and a yacht, all you need now is a mountain bike that does the hard work for you up hills. This German machine features an integrated power pack and Brose drive system. And cheating your way to the top means more time for looking down on others. Perfect! [www.rotwild.de](http://www.rotwild.de)

## £5,000 **Guapa** Urban One

Forget carbon and titanium, it's far more difficult — and thus more exotic — to build a bike from wood. The Urban One's frame is lovingly handmade in England using a bamboo-flax composite. Non-wooden bits include continuously variable hub transmission and belt drive. Total weight: 12.8kg. [www.guapa.cc](http://www.guapa.cc)

## £4,489 **Stromer** ST2

Clinical Swiss efficiency at its finest, the ST2 is — according to Stromer — the most advanced e-bike in the world. Its integrated motor produces 500W of power — that's as much as Bradley Wiggins at full tilt. It'll even interact wirelessly with your phone, so you can trade stock on the go. [www.stromerbike.com](http://www.stromerbike.com)

## £6,730 **Pininfarina** Fuoriserie

Designed, sparing no expense, to embody the style of 1930s classic cars, the Fuoriserie's top tube is overlaid with a walnut veneer. Yes, seriously. Modern touches include an integrated dynamo with LED lights and phone charger. [www.pininfarina.com](http://www.pininfarina.com)

## £5,600 **Dassi** Aero Road 6.2

One for the patriotically prosperous, this bike was designed in the UK by a former Rolls Royce engineer. It's partly manufactured on these shores too, using Toray 800 carbon. Together the frame, forks and seatpost weigh a mere 1.1kg. Just a shame it isn't more expensive! [www.dassi.com](http://www.dassi.com)



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# Natural weight loss

Berries and chillies are the latest go-to foods for those wanting to drop a few pounds

Easy pickings: weight loss just got easier

**W**e know CA readers are all dedicated athletes in their prime, but let's say — purely for argument's sake — there are people out there who consume more calories at the cake stop than they burn en route. Help could be at hand with a couple of recent studies suggesting there are natural ways to lose weight simply by making small changes to your dietary habits.

The first comes courtesy of researchers at Loughborough University, who found that people who snack on berries during the afternoon, rather than sweets or chocolate, consume fewer calories at their evening meal. Even if the calorific intake of the berries matches the naughty treat, those studied ate on average 134kcal fewer at dinner. However, it has to be pointed out the survey was commissioned by Seasonal Berries, which represents the soft fruit industry.

The second top tip is to gorge on chillies. Scientists at the University of Wyoming believe that capsaicin — the substance that makes chillies taste hot — could speed up metabolism, meaning you burn calories faster. Apparently, capsaicin activates receptors in the body that start the process of burning energy and convert 'bad' white fat into 'good' brown fat.

So you can feel less guilty about wolfing down that hot curry! Perfect.

## New Forest: room for 1,000 riders only

It's crazy to think that somewhere as peaceful as the New Forest could become a hotbed of controversy but — such is the power of cycling these days — that's what's happened.

In the latest twist, CTC and Sustrans have both come out against a draft New Forest Cycle Event Organisers Charter proposed by the New Forest National Park Authority, which seeks to limit the number of riders allowed to take part in events in the Forest. Both cycling organisations have been involved in drawing up the charter, with the intention of offering a balanced set of practices to help keep the peace between all users and inhabitants of the New Forest.

However, the sticking point comes with the fact that the current version of the charter will restrict to 1,000 the number of cyclists permitted to take part in any single event. This limitation comes in response to residents and local organisations claiming that cycling presents a threat to the "special qualities of the forest" and "a danger to people and wildlife".

Sam Jones, CTC campaigns coordinator, said: "This is a real blow to community-based cycle groups who organise events, not for profit but rather for the pure enjoyment of riding in a beautiful setting.

"The cap in cycling numbers, which the Park Authority

Compromise appears an uphill battle in the Forest



mandated to be included in the charter, was loosely justified on safety grounds. It is therefore mystifying and incredibly frustrating that our amendment, which placed the Safety Advisory Group at the very heart of decision-making for each and every cycle event, was rejected. Instead, an arbitrary and

discriminatory cap with no foundation in evidence will be implemented.

"This seems like a total rejection of cycle groups' willingness to engage and work with the NFNPA and those who live in the New Forest towards an amicable solution, and CTC will now consider what steps we can take next."





# Giordana

New 2015 FR-C Collection





## KAYE'S TOOLBOX TIPS



CA's resident mechanic, Kaye Patton is able to fix pretty much anything

**T**his being Britain, you can be certain that rain is going to be a part of cycling life from now until high summer. If you don't fancy getting your bum wet, fit some mudguards.



4. Rebolt it all through the fork fixing hole.



1. If you have long-reach caliper brakes, unbolt them from the fork and remove the front wheel.



2. Slide your mudguard through the fork and brakes.



3. Put the brake-mounting bolt through the mudguard's top mounting bracket.



5. Bolt the mudguard's two lower fixing points to the mudguard mounts at the bottom of the fork leg.



6. To get the mudguard perfectly positioned, reattach the wheel. Now find the mudguard stay eyelet bolts and slide these onto the mudguard stays.



7. Feed the stay eyelet bolts through the mudguard brackets and loosely attach a nut. Adjust the position of these on the stays so that the mudguard is close to the wheel but not touching it. Once happy, do up the nuts.



8. Cut the stays with a pair of bolt-cutters so that they don't extend much beyond the mudguard. Finish off by fitting a rubber cap to the end of the stays so their sharp ends don't hurt anyone.

**TIME TAKEN**  
**15**  
**MINUTES**

### TOOLS FOR THE JOB

- Allen keys
- Bolt-cutters

# Bigger and bigger

**Laura Laker**

**I**f your child's school isn't signed up to this year's Big Pedal, it's not too late to get involved. The national event, which runs from March 2-20, challenges children and parents to reduce congestion and pollution outside the school gates by ditching the car for 10 days, taking to bikes and scooters instead.

Schools with the biggest percentage change in children and parents cycling and scooting are in line for a raft of prizes, from a Youth Hostel Association trip, to Islabikes and Cyclepods, to National Trust family passes — as well as, of course, the kudos.

It's not just about competition; health improvements among kids who cycle are tangible. Twenty-four per cent of those surveyed last year said pupils taking part had improved concentration levels, while 39 per cent said children were happier for their active commute.

Since the Big Pedal's inception in 2011, journeys made by bike or scooter during the event rose by 88 per cent, while 76 per cent of



teachers say pupils continued to cycle and scoot to school afterwards.

Sharron Davies MBE, Olympic medallist and founder of [www.parents4sports.com](http://www.parents4sports.com), hit the nail on the head when she said: "When children live near to school, changing their journey can transform their health by incorporating a little exercise into their daily routines — before the school bell rings."

To get involved, discuss with your school before registering at [bigpedal.org.uk](http://bigpedal.org.uk). You'll receive a pack with resources to help get started. Registration closes on March 1. The Big Pedal is organised by Sustrans and funded by Bike Hub. Look out for a follow-up of the event in next month's issue of CA.  
**[www.bigpedal.org.uk](http://www.bigpedal.org.uk)**





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## FROM THE ED



## “Happy birthday NCN!”

If you've ever wondered why a little blue and red sign was directing you down a particularly quiet country lane, or graded track, then you are not alone among the many thousands of cyclists who regularly cycle along Sustrans routes around the country.

Every cyclist has followed a Sustrans route at some point.

A great many of us use them regularly for leisure rides and commuting as they provide either traffic-free or lightly-trafficked riding. The blue sign with a white number on a red background denotes a National Cycle Network (NCN) route — which, in their entirety, cover 14,000 miles across the UK. Catchy it's not, but sustainable transport (geddit?) has played a big part in cycling's rapid growth in recent times.

Which is why we are delighted to celebrate with Sustrans the 20th anniversary of the Millennium Commission's £42.5m grant that propelled a small Bristol charity into the national spotlight.

We asked Sustrans to select 20 of their favourite traffic-free routes from their forthcoming book *Sustrans' Traffic-Free Cycle Rides: 150 Great Days Out* by Wendy Johnson. The routes are on page 116 and Wendy writes about how she put together the rides on the preceding spread.

Over the years I've enjoyed many peaceful and enjoyable miles on Sustrans routes and I am sure you have too, even if you didn't know it at the time!

Two features this month were shot at Brighton's Preston Park cycle track which, since 1878, has been a popular venue for riding and racing. Recent safety concerns have put a stop to racing there. To sign the e-petition pressing for the survival of the UK's oldest velodrome go to Save Preston Park Cycle Track on Facebook.



*Luke*

Luke Edwardes-Evans Editor

# Inbox

**Write to us at**

**[cyclingactive@timeinc.com](mailto:cyclingactive@timeinc.com)**

## Sophie's world

There are bike riders and then there are cyclists. There are bike shops and then there are cyclists who run shops. The latter share a passion, camaraderie and are willing to go out of their way to help.

My daughter Sophie is at uni. Her bike was bust and she'd pushed it for miles to the uni bike guys to get it fixed. They told her to come back next week. Step forward M. Steel Cycles of South Gosforth, who don't know Sophie from Amy or care she is a van ride away. They only care she is a cyclist in need of help.

Sorted and safely home, bike running like new — no big hole in the bank balance. Cyclists going the extra mile for cyclists. I just wanted to say thank you.

*Antony Waite (Sophie's dad)*

## Don't be a loner

Reading the article by Natalie Fee in *CA* issue 67, I can only recommend the experience of joining a club. I was a keen cyclist as a youth but gave up when study and getting married came along. Years ago, my now wife caught me reading *Cycling Active* and asked if I would like a bike for my birthday.

I now have completed two London-to-Paris rides and take part in quite a few charity rides. I was missing the company of going out with a group, so got in touch with the Evesham Wheelers, a long-established club dating back as far as 1947, the year before I was born.

The initial correspondence was very encouraging and the guidance of their website was very helpful, giving information such as etiquette and the standard at which you should be able to ride to keep up — no one gets left, everyone is always looked after.

True to their word, when I turned up for my first ride the next Sunday in Evesham High Street, I was warmly welcomed. I joined the 'C group', as I felt more comfortable with their pace. The morning was wonderful. Carol who led our group was kind and informative, and there was no lack of conversation on the ride and during the coffee/cake stop.

My recommendation to all lone cyclists out



Join a club  
for camaraderie



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there is to join a club; you can ride out with them whenever you want.

*Tony Man*

### Lorry lunacy

I was cycling along a singletrack C-class road up a slight but long incline in the Lincolnshire countryside. As I approached the end, the incline turned left. At each side of the road, the verge was badly rutted, boggy with potholes filled with water (as is the norm during the winter).

A large articulated heavy lorry (LGV) came speeding around the bend and, on seeing me, slammed his brakes on. The unladen bulk tipper trailer skidded. I moved over as best I could to the left and had to stop and jump off onto the grass, as the rear offside of the trailer nearly took me out, missing me by millimetres. I waved my arm in frustration at the driver.

The driver stopped and ran towards me shouting and screaming. As he approached me, he continued to scream at me. I asked why he was going so fast on a small lane and said that driving like that could kill someone. He then tried to grab my bike, shouting, "I know how much these bikes cost and I'm going to smash it up!"

He then went on to say that all cyclists are a pain and that I should have been cycling on the grass, not the road, which was for vehicles, and that if he saw me again he would "kill me, run me down, etc." I said he needed to calm down and stop being so aggressive. He replied with lots of swear words, pointing at me, and then ran back to his lorry and drove off.

I was pretty shaken up, and totally confused as to why I had received this extreme outburst. The irony is that I'm general manager for a large logistics company, and we employ many hundreds of lorry drivers. I hold an LGV licence myself, so am very aware of the pressures and difficulties of driving lorries.

*Name withheld*

### Putting a foot in it

I was surprised and not a little disappointed by Natalie Fee's article in CA issue 67 — the line about how she had been told by the club that it had a 'no training shoe' policy.

Cycling is looking to change its image and encourage all walks of life to take part. Surely that should also include those who either can't afford cycling shoes with cleats or those like me, with a foot deformity that means I can't wear cycling shoes. I have to wear baseball-type training shoes to be able to get out on a bike, an activity I love and which has helped me lose 2.5 stone in last six months. I had thought about joining a local cycling club but if this is an example of an elitism that exists in club riding, I may just have to stick to riding the miles on my own.

*Simon Fletcher*

### Doped drivers

Living in the north of Manchester, I regularly cycle out to Dove Stones, Hollingworth Lake, taking in some fantastic scenery. But over the last few years, the number of drivers who pass me, giving off a whiff of weed, has increased and is now a regular occurrence.

I'm not a prude and understand that many people smoke this stuff, but the amount of people now driving and smoking it is scary. When is the government or police going to clamp down on the use of weed while driving?

*Pete Rothwell*



It's never too late to get a bike

STAR LETTER

### Cycling life starts at 40

I turned 40 a couple of years ago and, like many people of my age, realised I was rapidly getting to the 'halfway mark'. As you might expect, a brief audit of my current fitness status revealed that I had overlooked the need for regular exercise.

I purchased a refurbished Specialized Hybrid from Re-Cycle in Colchester and started to ride. Eighteen months later, and I have cycled 2,500 miles in the last 12 months. This has all been done either during the early hours of the morning (pre-dawn in many cases), weekends or as part of family rides.

Despite claiming, as recently as three months ago, "Yeah, but you'll never see me in Lycra," I am now riding in all weathers, all year round. I've had kit donated to me by friends, bought from Aldi, second-hand or even supplied as part of my subscription to CA (nice gilet!). I have spent a total of about £300 in the last 18 months, including the bike, clothing, and parts — and do most of my maintenance myself (although a friendly local bike shop is an essential for those more complex tweaks).

So the reason for my letter: I was always telling myself I hadn't got the time or

couldn't afford the cycling kit, but when you strip away all the excuses, it's surprising what you can actually do with a few hundred quid and a bit of determination to ride.

*Jon Marcar*

Letter of the month wins a pair of Shimano R107 cycling shoes worth £99.99!



### Calm down about Coke

The letter in CA issue 68 from Paul Bacon raises some issues with Coke as a drink but I take issue with his argument. I'm a member of the public and a cyclist. I can't stand the stuff, but what worries me is that the website Paul Bacon directs us to ([www.trueactivist.com](http://www.trueactivist.com)) gives no authoritative references on the subject; it simply makes unsubstantiated statements.

Coke has been around for 100 years or more and, as far as I'm aware, has never killed anyone directly. If you want a sugar rush from time to time, drink a Coke and don't worry.

*Neil Shillito*

## CYCLING ACTIVE

ISSUE 70

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# Dawes Coast2Coast £999.99

## 26in wheel adventure touring machine

**Matt Lamy**

**B**irmingham's finest, Dawes Cycles, is best known for its flagship Galaxy touring bikes, but this year the guys and gals at Castle Bromwich have pushed the envelope with a whole range of new drop-bar options. There's a sexy new carbon road bike, a couple of great sportive-perfect models called 3IMA, and here we have one of two new 26in-wheeled adventure touring bikes. This Coast2Coast model is the less expensive of the pair, coming in below the Cycle to Work threshold at £999.99.

### Frameset

Dawes's touring bikes are inextricably linked with Reynolds steel tubing, and

even though the Coast2Coast's wheel size is a little unusual, it's still Reynolds pipes at its heart. The smartly joined frame is put together using Reynolds 520 tubing — a very sensible frame material for expedition touring, as it offers a forgiving ride quality with the ability to be fixed by anybody with even rudimentary welding skills.

The Coast2Coast also comes with a chromoly steel fork, which has mounting points for front racks, while a Move Ride Lorry rear rack and SKS Chromoplastic mudguards come fitted as standard. There are also mounting points for three bottle cages. As we expect with modern bikes, the finish of the Coast2Coast is nigh-on perfect, and a classy heritage-inspired Dawes head tube badge sits proudly as a masthead.

### Components

One problem companies like Dawes face is that they don't have the buying power of global firms such as Trek or Specialized, and they can't cut margins in quite the same way as direct-to-customer brands. However, look at the

**"Reynolds steel tubing is very sensible for touring. It's forgiving and easy to fix"**

## Specification

**Frameset:** Reynolds 520 chromoly steel, fork chromoly steel

**Gears:** Shimano Sora (front mech) Alivio (rear) with Dura-Ace bar-end shifter, nine-speed, 11-34t

**Brakes:** Shimano BR517 mechanical discs

**Chainset:** Shimano Alivio triple

**Wheels:** Alex DP17 26in rims on Shimano Deore hubs

**Tyres:** Schwalbe Marathon 26x1.75in

**Handlebar:** Dawes aluminium flared drop

**Stem:** Aluminium

**Saddle:**

Dawes Comfort Touring

**Seatpost:** Aluminium

**Size range:**

48, 53, 58cm

**Weight:** 14.1kg / 31lb

(without rack)

**Size tested:** 53cm

**Contact:** www.

dawescycles.com

spec of the Coast2Coast and it's hard to see how anybody could offer much more for the sub-£1k asking price. The gearset is made up of a Sora front mech that combines quite a refined action with good reliability; a very hardy Alivio rear mech; and you even get a taste of Dura-Ace, albeit only with the bar-end gear shifters. The chainset, also an Alivio model, is a triple that combines with the 11-34t cassette to make almost any slope conquerable, even weighed down with your life in pannier bags.

Brakes are very impressive Shimano BR517 mechanical discs operated by both Tekro brake levers on the drops and secondary levers on the flats. Other components feature rather nice details, such as the flared aluminium bars and a touring saddle with a Dawes logo imprinted on it.

### Wheels

The spec doesn't even take much of a hit when you reach the wheels. The unique selling point of this particular range of bikes are those 26in wheels, which Dawes has opted to fit because the reduced diameter means they should be stronger than full-size 700c hoops for adventuring. The Alex rims feel plenty tough enough and being laced to Shimano Deore hubs means they'll run smoothly, too.

The Schwalbe Marathon tyres offer enough grip for anything up to paths ➡



Sturdy rear rack will get tourers salivating





**flight**

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Designed for fast commuting, Flight bikes are fitted with Shimano hydraulic disc brakes to provide incredible stopping power in all conditions, especially in the wet.

A wide ratio Shimano drivetrain with triple chainwheels provides, a range of gears capable of coping with virtually any gradient and the inclusion of mudguard and rack fittings further underlines the commuter practicality of these exciting bikes.

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F





Reynolds 520 frame soaks up the bumps

or hardpack trails, without sacrificing too much speed on smooth asphalt, while their 1.75in diameter aids comfort.

#### Riding

The Coast2Coast is comfortable for the most part, although those stiff 26in hoops do go a little way in counteracting the natural compliance of the steel frame. It's not quite as smooth a ride as, say, a Dawes Galaxy on full-size wheels, but you do still benefit from steel's natural reaction to bumps. So you don't feel imperfections in one hit as you would on an aluminium or many carbon frames; the shock builds up a little slower and disperses more gradually. Essentially, it lets you roll with the punches.

One benefit of those 26in wheels, though, is a far more lively ride than a typical steel touring bike. They seem to accelerate a lot quicker and control is a lot more direct than the relaxed handling you'd find with tourers. In short, it's a lot of fun, although not so lively that you've got to be on your pins the whole time.

#### Conclusion

Dawes really knows how to put together some very endearing touring, trekking and adventure bikes, and the Coast2Coast, with its 26in wheels, is an exciting tweak on old ideas. The spec is superb, the frame is great, and it's just a little bit different from most run of the mill drop-bar bikes.

What do those reduced-size hoops offer? More fun and more strength at a slight cost to comfort. But it's a very fair trade, and results in a bike that could make a lively little commuter when you're not crossing the Himalayas. Don't forget, it would make a fine tourer for less exotic locations, too (to read our go-anywhere adventure bike grouptest turn to page 44.)

**End**



Mechanical disc brakes: reliable and strong

## VERDICT

**A fine option for cycle touring off the beaten track**

### Spot on...

- Reynolds 520 frame is very smart: Good value, clever spec — with a taste of Dura-Ace
- 26in wheels are strong, lively and fun
- Quality bar-end shifters allow for perfect gearing

### Could do better

- Not quite as good for road touring as, say, Dawes's Galaxy

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	17/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	20/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>93</b> /100

## ALTERNATIVES

### Surly Long Haul Trucker £1,025

The Long Haul Trucker is one of the few other 26in drop-bar touring bikes we know of. The chromoly steel frame features thicker-walled tubes for strength, which is handy because it's positively bristling with fixing points for mudguards, racks and bottle cages. Shimano Sora and XT make up the gears, with Tektro canti brakes.

[www.ison-distribution.com](http://www.ison-distribution.com)



### Raleigh Sojourn £1,100

Although it runs on full-size 700c hoops, the Sojourn has plenty in common with the Coast2Coast. There's a Reynolds 631 steel frame, nine-speed Shimano gearset with Sora triple chainset, and Avid BB5 mechanical disc brakes. For a bit of luxury, you even get a Brooks B17 leather saddle, too.

[www.raleigh.co.uk](http://www.raleigh.co.uk)



## CA EXPLAINER

### Bar-end shifters

Anyone used to STI levers may think it's a bit of a chore reaching down to the bar-ends to change gear, but as well as being very simple to use and fix, these shifters provide one huge bonus for pernickety bike-faffers. The left shifter for the front mech is not indexed, meaning you can adjust it minutely as you ride, thereby eliminating chain rub altogether. Not only good for chain longevity, but also your sanity on a 1,200km trek.



Dura-Ace bar-end shifters add a high-end touch



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# NEW BIKE TESTED

## WHY THIS BIKE?

It has an upgraded spec and new paintjob and is cycle-scheme friendly  
**BEST FOR**  
 Winter training, commuting  
**TESTED THIS MONTH**  
 On icy, muddy and wet roads



# Kinesis Racelight T2 £999.99

## Tough bike that loves the season you hate

**Simon Smythe**

**K**inesis UK has built itself a reputation for creating good, honest bikes that are perfect for British riding conditions and that don't cost the earth. The Crosslight road range consists of four models, three of which are available as complete bikes. The T2 is the entry level one and has just been updated with a higher spec and smart new graphics — but crucially still costs a penny under £1,000 and therefore qualifies as a cycle-scheme bike.

Commuting is just one of the strings to its bow, however. As well as having all the attributes of a winter training bike (mudguard eyes, clearance for bigger tyres, racy angles and proportions) it has seatstay rack mounts so it's perfect for heading out of town for a weekend of light touring. It's also light and speedy enough that sportives and reliability

trials aren't out of the question. Versatility is one the T2's selling points.

### Frameset

The T2 is made from 7005 aluminium, a standard alloy for mass-produced TIG-welded bicycle frames, but the tubing is double butted, meaning wall thicknesses are reduced at points where there is less loading, typically towards the centre of the tubes.

Kinesis claims 1.64kg for the size 54, which is impressive at this price.

The tubes are oversized but round in profile, which gives the T2 a semi-traditional look — perfect for winter, when old school-looking frames are still the norm. The top tube slopes slightly, for better standover clearance and to stiffen up the frame by reducing the size of the main and rear triangles. The seatstays curve in an hourglass shape reminiscent of 1990s Cannondales. This is supposed to add comfort by flexing — whether it does or not is hard to say.

The geometry is sporty, with the head tube angle of the size 54 frame half a degree steeper than the seat tube angle (73° and 73.5° respectively). This keeps the wheelbase short at just under 100cm, while allowing clearance for mudguards between the rear wheel and seat tube, but results in toe overlap — not a good thing for a bike to be used as

## Specification

**Frameset:** 7005 aluminium with carbon/alu fork  
**Gears:** Shimano Tiagra 10-speed  
**Chainset:** FSA Omega 50/34  
**Brakes:** Tektro R317 long drop  
**Wheels:** Shimano R501  
**Tyres:** Freedom by WTB Racine  
**Saddle:** Kinesis Aon  
**Seatpost:** FSA alu  
**Bar/stem:** FSA alu  
**Weight:** 21.9lb  
**Size tested:** 54  
[www.kinesisbikes.co.uk](http://www.kinesisbikes.co.uk)

a commuter in traffic — and arguably places too much weight over the front wheel. More about this later.

The fork has carbon blades and an alloy steerer with mudguard eyes — there's an aluminium fork also available that reduces the T2's overall price to £934.

### Components

The T2 is well specced, with 10-speed Shimano Tiagra shifters, derailleurs and 12-28 cassette. The latest Tiagra really is superb, with shifting as plush as anything. An FSA compact chainset paired with outboard bottom bracket bearings replaces the original Shimano version.

Tektro long-drop calipers are fitted so that fatter tyres can be used — though not with the mudguards that come with the build, which only just clear 25c tyres.

The finishing kit is FSA again — all workmanlike aluminium pieces, with a comfortable bar, offering just the right amount of drop and presenting no problems reaching the shifters from all positions.

### Wheels

The Shimano R501s are good wheels at this level. Of course they're not the very lightest, but in a couple of months of use they have stayed perfectly true.

The Freedom by WTB Racine tyres that the T2 comes with are pleasingly resistant to cuts — the first outing on the



Snug perch may not suit all tastes





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Bikes Etc on the Reacto Dura Ace in Jan. 2015



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Tektro long drop calipers allow greater clearance



Tiagra offers up a fluid gear change

T2 was a mid-January reliability ride in the Chilterns in freezing drizzle on filthy lanes where many poor souls punctured, but the WTB tyres afterwards looked as good as new. However, to achieve this a very hard compound generally has to be used, which means poor grip in the wet. Fortunately that particular ride had many sharp objects on the road but no sharp corners: the WTBs have performed badly whenever the road is greasy and have actually dumped bike and rider unceremoniously on the deck. You could say they offer plenty of bang for your buck...

#### Riding

The ride quality is firm, as you'd expect of an aluminium frame that is built more for durability than high performance. It has all the stiffness its target audience would ever need. However, it's not uncomfortable and has handled three and four-hour rides leaving a semi-fit rider feeling as fresh as you'd expect. It has also been put through some speedier sessions and hasn't been lacking there either. Naturally, at 21lb — which is not bad for a sub-£1K winter bike but not light by any stretch of the imagination — it won't climb and accelerate like a skinnier, more expensive carbon bike, because in cycling, just like in everything else, you get what you pay for.

Perhaps the trade-off for the T2

being designed to behave like a race bike is a slight lack of front-end stability. We've established that the WTB tyres are poor in the wet, but they break away without warning and you have to wonder whether a longer front-centre measurement might slow the steering down, distribute weight better and perhaps give the rider a bit of warning if the front wheel starts to go in a corner.

#### Conclusion

The Racelight T2 is a great bike for the money but is perhaps not quite as versatile as it would like to be. Because of its racy geometry it is better as a winter training bike than a commuter. Toe overlap is a fact of life for taller riders, but in a medium-sized bike it shouldn't be such an issue. The fast steering thanks to the steep head angle will appeal to racers but with cheap tyres it can be a little perilous in the wet, as we discovered. With this caveat (and a new saddle) we would recommend it.

**End**

## VERDICT

**Fast winter trainer that would benefit from a couple of immediate upgrades**

#### Spot on...

- Light for the price
- Plush Tiagra shifting
- Smart finish

#### Could do better

- Needs better tyres
- Unappealing saddle

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	17/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	17/20
RIDE COMFORT	16/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	19/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>88</b> /100

## ALTERNATIVES

### Dolan Preffisio £799.99

One of our favourite winter bikes, the Dolan Preffisio, has a bombproof aluminium frame and in this build, with the latest 11-speed Shimano 105 in its entirety — chainset, calipers and all — it looks like a great bargain. One of our staffers has been riding his Preffisio almost exclusively for four years.



### Ribble 7005 Audax £869.95

A perennial favourite as a racing man's winter trainer, the famous blue Ribble, like the Dolan, offers exceptional value for money. As we went to press, it was available via Ribble's 'bikebuilder' program on its website for an incredible £869.95 with the older 10-speed Shimano Ultegra groupset.



## CA EXPLAINER

### Mud flaps

Proper, full-length, fixed mudguards are absolutely essential during winter. Old-school clubmen used to lengthen their rear mudguards even more by riveting on a flap made from an old plastic Stork margarine tub (other brands were available). As margarine tubs are not as strong as they used to be, cut up a Muc-Off bottle to create the perfect modern mud flap.



Muc-Off: multi-purpose cleaning product

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# NEW BIKE TESTED

## WHY THIS BIKE?

A great all-rounder with a full Ultegra groupset for less than £1,700

## BEST FOR

Anything from recreational riding to racing

## TESTED THIS MONTH

The highways and byways of leafy Hertfordshire



# KTM Revelator 4000 £1,699.99

## Well-specced race bike that's quick and comfy

**Tom Isitt**

In the spirit of full disclosure and openness, I should probably declare that I have owned two KTMs in the past, and loved them both. They were motorbikes, and they were lairy and orange and noisy and immense fun. So I was interested to see how the bicycle part of the brand stacked up.

The bicycle side of KTM was spun-off in 2012, but the family ties are there to see in the attention to detail and the orange-and-black livery common to many of the models. Although KTM has been making bicycles in Austria since 1964, and sells 200,000 bicycles a year, it was only in 2012 that it began to take performance road cycling more seriously. The first ranges were the Strada alloy-framed bikes, and the Revelator range of carbon-framed bikes. The brand is relatively new to the UK cycling scene, and is still fighting to get a toehold in a very crowded market.

### Frameset

KTM uses a modular approach to the Revelator range, offering exactly the same frame from the Revelator 3300 (costing £1,300) to the Revelator Master (costing £3,000). Even the top-end frames, used on the Prime and Prestige models, use the same geometry, just with different carbon lay-ups.

That geometry errs slightly on the side of comfort, with a 73.5° head tube angle and a head tube length of 160mm for the 55cm model (550mm effective top tube length), combining with a relatively low-slung bottom bracket (7.9cm bottom bracket drop) and a 992mm wheelbase. Those figures add up to a frame that should be comfortable and stable, without sacrificing agility. The stack-to-reach ratio (see CA Explainer panel) is around 1.43, making it a racier frame than you might think — several UCI Continental teams are running KTM bikes with the same geometry.



**“Several UCI Continental teams are running KTM bikes with the same geometry”**

## Specification

**Frameset** Carbon compact with carbon bladed aero fork  
**Gears** Shimano Ultegra 6800 11-speed, 11-28 Shimano cassette  
**Brakes** Shimano Ultegra  
**Chainset** Shimano Ultegra compact double 50x34t  
**Wheels** DT Swiss R24 Spline  
**Tyres** Continental Grand Prix 700x23c  
**Handlebar** Ritchey Comp Road (42in on size 55)  
**Stem** Ritchey Comp 4-axis (100mm, size 55)  
**Saddle** Fizik Ardea  
**Seatpost** Ritchey Comp 300mm/27.2mm  
**Size range** 49-59cm  
**Weight:** 7.75kg/17.05lb as tested (without pedals or bottle cages)  
**Size tested:** 55cm  
[www.flidistribution.co.uk](http://www.flidistribution.co.uk)

The frame is a well-crafted and attractive affair (made in the Far East, assembled in Austria), with a quality matt finish and featuring internal cable-routing. The graphics are fairly subtle and add a touch of class to proceedings. To keep things stiff, the Revelator has a substantial bottom bracket junction, hefty tapered head tube and slightly oversized chainstays, all of which combine to keep flex to a minimum. The bottom bracket is a press-fit Shimano BB72-41B.

### Components

Using the same frame throughout the range has allowed KTM to fit higher-spec components than might otherwise be possible. This is certainly the case with the Revelator 4000, which offers a full Shimano Ultegra groupset for Shimano 105 money.

Ultegra is generally considered to be the ‘sweet-spot’ in the Shimano range — better than 105, cheaper (but heavier) than Dura-Ace — and in its latest 6800 11-speed incarnation it's better than ever. Standard spec for the KTM's groupset is a compact double 50/34t chainset and an 11-28t cassette, giving a good spread of gears for most situations.

The Ritchey Comp finishing kit is perfectly reasonable stuff, and pretty much what you'd expect on a bike at this price. It's all standard 6061 aluminium stuff, and does the job



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Ultegra groupset: high-end kit that won't miss a shift

just fine. The stock saddle, a Fizik Ardea, was a bit firm and blunt-nosed for my tastes; if I were buying one of these bikes, I'd upgrade the saddle and seatpost pretty much straight away.

### Wheels

Interestingly, KTM has gone against the vogue for wider rims and tyres by spec'ing DT Swiss R24 Spline wheels, which have a 19mm internal width and are shod with 23mm Continental Grand Prix tyres. The frame will take 25mm tyres (just). The lacing is radial 24-spoke (bladed) at the front, and two-cross 28-spoke (also bladed) at the back. At 1,725g, the wheels are a reasonable weight, and DT Swiss has a good reputation for strength and reliability.

### Riding

The Revelator 4000 frame manages to strike the right balance between stiffness and comfort, and the geometry means that it's a forgiving ride — not too twitchy, not too lazy. The 73.5° steering angle and 52mm of trail give a positive, planted feel at the front. It turns in crisply, holds its line well, and yet still responds to rider input without ever feeling nervous or unsettled. Even on horrible road surfaces, the frame smoothes things out while still giving positive feedback from the wheels.

The Ultegra gruppo offers slick and precise shifting and the brakes — set up 'Continental-style' with the front brake lever on the left — have plenty of stopping power but a slightly wooden feel; different brake blocks might give more feedback.

### Conclusion

The KTM is easy on the eye, easy on the wallet, and easy to ride quickly. For £1,700 you get a very accomplished frameset, full Ultegra gruppo, and some reasonable finishing kit. There is room for some minor upgrades, and a good set of wheels would really make the KTM a standout ride, but as it stands it's an absolute gem. **End**



Internal cabling keeps things neat and aero

## VERDICT

**Great-looking all-rounder with good level of equipment and sparkling performance.**

### Frame

- High-spec gruppo
- Styling

### Could do better...

- Saddle
- Wheels
- 23mm tyres

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	18/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>90</b> /100

## ALTERNATIVES

### Giant Defy Composite 1 £1,600

You would expect the world's biggest bike manufacturer to have an offering at this level, and the Defy Composite 1 is it. The full Ultegra gruppo is present and correct, although there is no internal cable routing for those who like such things. A very capable all-rounder, albeit a touch on the heavy side.

[www.giant-bicycles.com](http://www.giant-bicycles.com)



### Trek Emonda S6 £1,800

Trek's new Emonda S6 comes in Trek's more relaxed H2 fit (taller head tube) and features Ultegra throughout as well as Trek's own-brand Bontrager alloy finishing kit. In red and black, it's a real looker too, although at a claimed 8.38kg, it's no lightweight.

[www.trekbikes.com](http://www.trekbikes.com)



## CA EXPLAINER

### Stack-to-reach ratio

The stack-to-reach (STR) ratio is generally considered to be the best guide to how a bike will fit you (without actually sitting on it). The stack is the vertical distance between the middle of the bottom bracket and the middle of the top of the head tube, while the reach is the horizontal distance between the middle of the bottom bracket and the middle of the top of the top tube. With these two numbers, you can calculate the STR and get a reasonable idea of the fit. Anything under 1.35 represents a very stretched-out riding position, while anything over 1.50 represents a pretty upright position. Most builders aim for between 1.40 and 1.50 STR on medium-sized frames.



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# NEW BIKE TESTED

## WHY THIS BIKE?

It's the entry-level sports bike in Halfords's new 13 range  
**BEST FOR**  
 Fitness, commuting, shorter sportives  
**TESTED THIS MONTH**  
 In winter sunshine



# 13 Intrinsic Alpha 2015 £499.99

## Semi-compact frame with on-trend brake mounts make this sports bike an entertaining prospect

**Luke Edwardes-Evans**

**H**alfords has specced its new range of 13 bikes to appeal to cyclists seeking fitness, style and maybe a sportive or two. At half a grand, the Intrinsic Alpha is the most affordable in 13's sports bike line-up.

### Frameset

This is an aluminium alloy version of the distinctive 13 frame design characterised by its brake-free seatstays, wacky tube profiles in the main triangle and fork with the brake mounted behind the crown.

Both brakes — the rear is tucked away under the chainstays behind the bottom bracket — are secured with twin mounting bosses for each caliper arm. Attaching the brakes to the frame with

two mounting points will reduce flex in the caliper arms and also means the rear stays can be slimmed down for greater ride comfort.

Why then is there a bridge on the rear stays? Well, if you want to fit mudguards (there are drillings front and back) you'll need it to secure the rear guard.

There's an aero look to many of the frame spars and that explains why the front brake is hidden behind the fork. That might shave fractions of a second on a descent, but it's more style than function. Satin white with blue accents suit the frame well, but the embossed '13' badge behind the seat post is a bit naff. The '13' is upside down as a nod to the bike racing tradition of flipping the number 13 race number.

### Components

Apart from the arresting frame it's the brakes that intrigue, and these TRP calipers impress from the off, feeling powerful and flex-free. Direct-mounted brakes (cantilevers and centre-pulls) have been around for years but these latest versions offer another interesting alternative to standard calipers and discs.

Gears are eight-speed Shimano Claris with a compact (50x34t) FSA

## Specification

**Frameset:** Aluminium semi-compact with 7005 aluminium-bladed aero fork and 1/8in chromoly steerer

**Gears:** Shimano Claris 8-speed, 11-30t Shimano HG50 cassette

**Brakes:** TRP T822 side-pull front, TRP T820 centre-pull rear

**Chainset:** FSA Tempo compact double 50x34t

**Wheels:** 13 RS rims 28 front, 32 rear on 9mm small flange hubs

**Tyres:** VeeRubber 172 700x23c

**Handlebar:** 13 RS, 40cm (S), 42cm (M, L), 44cm (XL)

**Stem:** 13RS, 100mm (S), 110mm (M), 120mm (L), 130mm (XL)

**Saddle:** 13 RS chromoly rails

**Seatpost:** 13 RS alloy 27.2mm

**Size range:** S, M, X, XL

**Weight:** 11kg/24.2lb

**Size tested:** XL (58cm)

**Contact:** www.halfords.com

chainset and 11-30t cassette. The levers are very comfortable and operation is the same as all the other STI systems in the Shimano range. You only get eight gears though and that is noticeable, with bigger jumps between each sprocket and a slower, more clattery upshift.

Own-branded kit holds you up and works fine. The saddle looks sporty but is well padded. It's the right choice for an aluminium bike with a firm ride.

### Wheels

Radial spoked at the front with 28 spokes and 32 at the rear, the 13-branded wheels have V section rims and go well with this bike. They are not particularly light but should last at least a year of all-round riding. The VeeRubber tyres in a 23c section would be worth upgrading for something with more feedback.

### Riding

You know when a bike has got something right when your first shakedown ride, the one when you expect to make a few stops to faff about with the gears and such, morphs pleasantly from one hour to two.

Other than set the saddle to the correct height, fit pedals and clack the brakes, the Intrinsic felt spot-on within a few metres of the get-go. Scaling up parts of the bike like the handlebars (44cm) and cranks (175mm on the 58cm model) generates confidence.



Inverted seatpost badge is a quirky touch





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## “The Intrinsic Alpha felt spot-on within a few metres of the get-go”

Impressive too is the location of the brake levers and neatly wrapped bar tape.

Staying with the front end, the tall head tube and shallow drop bars make it really easy to get on the drops. Riding on the tops, either on the brake hoods or the centre of the bars, is a super-comfy position, but if you need to get into a more aero position the ‘hooks’ are a welcome option.

There is a downside to elevated front ends, intended to provide a less crunched riding position for greater comfort. Opening up the angle of your torso to your legs also places your hands and shoulders further from the front wheel, resulting in a fuzzy steering feel. This is fine once you get accustomed to it; it’s the initial ‘turn-in’ feeling that disappoints.

There’s little else to note about the handling, which is stable and safe. At 11kg (24.2lb) the Intrinsic is not a light bike, and the aluminium frame might be stiff but lively it ain’t. At this price point, most if not all bikes weigh over 9kg (19.8lb) and bless it, the Intrinsic is no gazelle on the climbs.

### Conclusion

With its aero-chic frame and wacky brakes, the 13 Intrinsic Alpha certainly stands out from the entry-level sports bike crowd. And while the frame doesn’t quite live up to its looks, the direct-mount front brake at least offers plenty of stopping power.



## VERDICT

**Head turning starter bike ideal for first year of rides and sportives**

### Spot on...

- Scaling of components for frame size
- Shimano Claris gears
- Comfy seat

### Could do better

- Muck loving rear brake
- Tyre upgrade to 25c
- Carbon fork would save weight

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	18/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	16/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	18/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>88</b> /100

## ALTERNATIVES

### 13 Innate Cyclo-Cross £499.99

Basically the same as the Intrinsic, but with mechanical disc brakes on tougher wheels and tyres. It’s heavier and would be more suited to commuting and Sustrans paths than hilly sportives.



### Ribble 7005 Winter/Audax from £549

A perennial favourite from the Preston-based shop and mail order outfit. The frame is a traditional shape, butted 7005 aluminium with a carbon fork and mudguard eyes. You spec it up on the Ribble website. The base model build with Shimano Sora nine-speed gears, Rodi Airline wheels and ITM bars and stem comes to £549.



## CA EXPLAINER

### Crank length

Three crank lengths are fitted to the Intrinsic: 170mm for the small frames, 172.5mm for the medium and 175mm for the large and extra large. The crank is the lever you push down on, which is attached to the crank spider on the right-hand side and the bottom bracket axle on the left.

Generally the crank length should correspond to your leg length, with long-legged riders choosing the longest cranks. A shorter crank is easier to spin quickly though, and riders of all sizes sometimes prefer to choose cranks of 172.5mm or less. Increments are small but you would be surprised how different each crank length feels. Always ask what length the cranks are before you buy.



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# 7 OF THE BEST

# Bike locks

**If you're going to leave your bike unattended, even for a moment, you need one of these — a tough, thief-foiling lock**

Words James Shrubsall

**B**icycle locks are a bit like dustbin lorries. Bear with me. They're heavy, unglamorous and tasked with the dirty work, but we'd be up the creek without them. Bear in mind, only the very luckiest souls within our great pastime have never had cause to utter the words 'thieving' and 'bastard' in tandem.

It's often a relatively inconsequential item that's filched: a saddle or perhaps a light. But rest assured, bike thieves are always on the lookout for new targets. Such is the determination and

low cunning that some will employ, you're only ever a moment's complacency away from having your favourite inanimate companion taken from you for ever.

But all is not lost. There are some serious bike locks on the market, and even the best are reasonably affordable — especially when considered in relation to the cost of replacing your bike. Unfortunately, none can claim to be totally thief-proof.

A ne'er-do-well with an angle grinder and

bolt-cutters is able to get through most locks within five minutes. But wielding power tools on an urban street generally attracts attention. Protected by a good lock on a well-trodden thoroughfare, your bike's reasonably safe.

Transporting a lock around with you on your bike isn't convenient. At the very least, it adds considerable heft. But when you weigh up this burden against losing your bike, a good lock is more than worth it. Here are seven of the best.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Type of lock

Generally, there are two types of lock: cable-chain and shackle. While shackle locks once enjoyed a go-to reputation as the toughest of the two, modern cable locks are now the shackle's equal. Side by side, if they have independent security ratings, the choice comes down to which type of lock you will find easier to live with.

### Weight

The locks in our selection weigh as much as 2.7kg, which is a significant chunk of mass to be adding to your everyday travels on the bike. While you might feel reassured by a lock's heft, you might not want to transport it up that one-in-six hill on your daily commute. Like the cable-versus-shackle decision, this is a balancing act that relies significantly on personal choice.

### Testing certification

An independent testing certification such as Sold Secure adds an extra level of confidence and credibility to your chosen lock. Gold, Silver and Bronze ratings are assigned by testing bodies, with gold being the most secure. All seven of the locks here are independently rated.



## Knog Bouncer £39.99

With Knog's reputation for kookie designs, it comes as no surprise that the Bouncer is far and away the cutest lock on test (who'd have thought that a shackle lock could be cute?). However, we'd draw the line at dangling it out of a handbag and showing it off at parties (as Knog suggests on its website). With a silicone coating, the Bouncer's Sold

Secure Bronze-rated shackle is designed to protect your paint, though there's not a whole lot of room inside that 120mm 'D'. For glass-half-full people, its small size (and its low, 860g weight) does make it very portable.

7

**Sweet lil' porta-lock**

www.wiggle.co.uk



## Zéfal K-Traz A25 £36.99

The only lock on test without an independent rating, the K-Traz (inspired by San Francisco's most rocky island prison) is, for what it's worth, rated four out of five by Zéfal. The finish is of good quality with thick vinyl cable-sleeve and a meaty, double-locking barrel. At 1,200mm, it's long enough to accommodate an awkward bike and a lamppost. It's also fairly flexible and

should fit comfortably into your rucksack. It's reasonably heavy, though, at 1.75kg, which although reassuring on the security front, will mean you need to press a bit harder on the pedals when carrying it.

7

**A security rating would've been nice**

www.chickencycles.co.uk



## Abus Ultimate £34.99

Standing out from the crowd by dint of its fluoro body, the Abus comes equipped with a basic frame mount and a pair of keys. The shackle's soft-feel coating promises to keep your bike blemish-free, while its 230mm length means it'll readily go through frame, wheel and around a railing. The shackle locks smoothly

and snugly into the body, and the key action is equally pleasing. The Ultimate comes with a Sold Secure Silver rating and an attractive swing-tag. At 1.55kg, it's reasonably portable too.

8

**No-frills, great value shackle**

www.halfords.com



**CYCLING  
ACTIVE  
BEST ON A  
BUDGET**

## Squire Mako Conger £39.99

The Mako Conger is the only combination/chain lock here. That chain is encased in a super-tough PVC outer, and the hardened steel links (the material of choice of all seven locks) is visible through the sleeve — and they look beefy, as attested to by the Sold Secure Bronze rating. We love the quality movement of the five-digit combination code

barrel, and the 900mm length is pretty useful too. The Mako Conger can't quite match some of its rivals for quality of finish, though; it's a bit plasticky in places and starting to look a little tatty. Weight is 1.8kg.

8

**Industrial combi that we'd trust**

www.raleigh.co.uk





## Kryptonite New York M18 £99.99

Kryptonite's considerable reputation precedes it, and its flagship M18 shackle did not disappoint. Plastered in approval stamps and stickers (including Gold ratings for cycle and motorcycle security), it means business — as you'd discover were you to drop it on your foot. Its leverage-resistant 18mm shackle is an accommodating 260mm

long and the key action is butter-smooth. It even has a natty keyhole dust cover and LED keylight. It's not cheap, though, and all that weight, 2.7kg, is a double-edged sword when it comes to transporting it.

**Heavy, not cheap, worth it**



www.madison.co.uk



## Hiplok £64.99

Neat use of wordplay indicates the Hiplok's on-trend attitude and the fact that it's designed to be worn around the waist for ease of portability. Clever. This canvas-sleeved, hardened steel folds up into a very compact ball, but it does weigh upwards of 2kg, so being able to distribute that weight around your person

is a nifty solution. Boasting a Sold Secure Silver rating, it's a reasonable 850mm-long, so will accommodate plenty of bike and post, as well as waist sizes from 24 to 44in.



**Neat and innovative, at a price**

www.hiplok.com



## Masterlock Criterion £84.99

One of just two locks on test that sport a Sold Secure Gold sticker and cost close to £100, the Criterion sits resolutely at the business end of proceedings. You'd be hard pressed to guess as much, though, because it looks and feels rather cheap. With a plasticky body, dainty 1.3kg weight and the shackle's less-than-snug fit into the body,

only the plush keyhole dust cover hints at the quality within. But it's a useful 270mm-long with a frame mount included, and we're not going to argue with a respected independent body like Sold Secure.

**Cheap feel belies its tough credentials**



www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk



## VERDICT

Such a varied spread of prices can complicate things when it comes to choosing a test winner. In this case though, even though the Kryptonite costs nearly three times as much as some of its test rivals, we feel the extra outlay — and considerable weight — is worth it. Your bike might easily cost upwards of £1,000 — an investment worth protecting with a premium lock, we'd say. Sold Secure Gold ratings for cycle and motorcycle protection, plus Classe SRA approval, make it the most secure item on test, and it has a quality feel and finish to back that up.

While accepting that no lock is totally thief-proof, we'd trust all of the locks tested if we had to leave a bike on the street for a short while — though we'd like to see Zéfal invest in accreditation for extra confidence.





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# Adventure bikes

## Three rough, tough, go-anywhere companions

Words Cycling Active Photos Mike Prior

### Frame

If you're going to head off to parts unknown, you shouldn't be worrying about outright speed or weight. Carbon and aluminium bikes won't be top of your list. Far better to opt for the strong but forgiving ride qualities of steel or titanium. Three bottle cage mounts might be handy, too.

**Specialized AWOL Elite** £1,200

### Wheels and tyres

With potentially a lot of weight being carried on the bike, you'll need a strong wheelset — even just bumping up and down kerbs is enough to make spokes ping into oblivion. Fit them with tyres that have a good mix of grip, puncture protection and comfort.

Ask me to remember one assembly from secondary school and I don't have to think for long. My alma mater has few notable past pupils, but one day we were visited by an 'old boy' called Colonel John Blashford-Snell. Now, 'Blashers', as he is known, is famous for being an explorer. His particular specialism is in discovering lost cities and civilisations deep in rainforests. Once, he even trekked up the Amazon to deliver an upright piano to the Wai Wai tribe. Admittedly, he doesn't do his adventuring on a bike, but he represents a spirit of adventure that seems to be dying out as we grow more apathetic yet simultaneously more scared of the wider world.

Why am I telling you all this? It's because the bikes we've chosen to test ride here are truly adventure bikes. Indeed, the Stanforth Kibo was

inspired by real-life, bike-mounted explorers much like Blashers. The bicycle, any bicycle, represents an opportunity for adventure, but the machines here really are designed to cross deserts, jungles and mountains.

#### Is this bike for me?

If your approach to cycling is to ride the same old routes again and again on your lightweight carbon speed machine, desperately trying to improve Strava segment times, then perhaps these won't float your twine-and-jerrycan raft. But if you want a bike that will be just as surefooted on the daily commute, weekend towpath potter, credit card tour or even self-supported tropical trek, this is the type of machine you need. Though they place strength above svelteness, they'd be fine for a sportive.

#### Bikes on test

Starting our test is Specialized's AWOL Elite, a mass-produced Reynolds steel frame fully loaded with racks front and back, Shimano Sora nine-speed gears and Tektro Spyre mechanical discs. Next, a flat-bar wonder: the Stanforth Kibo, which resurrects the notion of using mountain bikes as prime adventure machines. Again there's a steel frame — Reynolds 631 tubes hand-built in the UK — and it comes fitted with a Shimano Deore and XT gearset with old-school canti brakes. Finally, the Spa Cycle Ti Adventure is a luxury titanium option with a mixture of Sora and Deore gears and Shimano mechanical discs.

Can the mass-market king lead the way on the trail of adventure? Or will our couple of boutique bike builds from here in Blighty quietly dispatch it deep in the jungle? Let's go wild.



**Stanforth Kibo** £1,495

#### Brakes

Disc brakes may offer the best performance, but don't discount good-quality V-brakes or cantis, which are potentially easier to fix. In all cases, if you'll be away from civilisation, it's best to stick with cable-operated stoppers rather than hydraulic.

**Spa Cycles Ti Adventure** £1,600

## £1,500 Adventure bikes What to expect

- Strong and comfortable frame
- Rack mounts, front and rear
- Ultra-reliable components
- Tough wheels with all-terrain tyres



# Specialized AWOL Elite £1,200

## Tough steel tourer from a household name brand

Aside from commuting hybrids, global bike firms have tended not to join in with the rear rack brigade, however the AWOL Elite is Specialized's current foray into the touring market. While the three other bikes in the AWOL range appear more like do-it-all road options, this Elite model looks to appeal to the world traveller as well as the urban commuter.

### Frameset

It's not very often you find a big-name bike brand dabbling in steel, either, but the AWOL's frame is made from what Specialized calls "Reynolds premium chromoly". It's all put together very nicely, and while the frame itself doesn't have quite the same cachet as our other bikes on test, it is very smart.

It does appear a little different from both typical Specialized road bikes and

typical touring machines, though, with a significantly sloping top tube and a high head tube for a more upright riding position. The fork is also steel, and this Elite model looks like a true big-ride bruiser with racks included front and back. A welcome set of chunky stainless steel mudguards keep road wash from reaching the rider.

### Components

The Shimano Sora gearset is teamed with a very handy FSA Omega triple chainset for a huge range of gearing options. That means no matter how big and heavy the bags you attach to those racks, you'll still be able to spin on up any slope. That said, Sora is a road bike groupset and while it does a reliable job on something like a winter bike, the rear derailleur especially feels just a little delicate attached to this brute.

Most other components are standard Specialized own-brand kit, including a great Body Geometry saddle. However, the Spyre mechanical disc brakes come from Tektro. They're not as powerful as we'd like, and even taking the hefty all-up weight into account, seem less adept at scrubbing off speed than most rim brakes.

### Wheels

The AWOL Elite's hoops look the business, even if they're relatively nondescript aluminium options. They certainly roll nicely, and the huge 42c Specialized Trigger Sport tyres aren't as slow as they look, although they are impressively grippy and very comfortable.

### Riding

In fact, a combination of the tyres' well-balanced performance and the frame's supremely stable handling meant that I even survived a brief encounter with some black

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	18/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	19/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>92</b> /100



ice while aboard the AWOL. Thankfully that was the only heart-stopping moment — over normal surfaces this is a brilliant cruiser.

Sports cyclists might look at the overall package and wonder how anybody could choose it ahead of

something light and quick. But even if we put aside the kit-carrying potential, the basic AWOL performance is so smooth and relaxing, you'd be tempted to forego a few mph for the enhanced ride experience. For cycle tourists especially, the ability to look around you and soak in the environment without worrying about how your bike

might react to road imperfections is a huge bonus. Ditto cycle commuters, whose minds might be distracted before or after a busy day.

The downside of this is that handling isn't exciting, and while it can cope with rougher terrain, this is a bike that shines brightest on roads, tracks and paths rather than barely-there trails.

## ALTERNATIVE

### Trek 520 Disc £950

Steel bikes by big brands might be rare, but they're not completely unknown, and this 520 model is Trek's take on the traditional touring machine. It's made from chromoly steel tubing, with a rear rack included and low-rider mounts on the fork. A triple chainset, 11-32t rear cassette and a Deore rear mech operated by bar-end shifters offer secure gear changes, while Hayes CX Expert discs provide stopping power.

[www.trekbikes.com](http://www.trekbikes.com)



## Specification

### Frameset

Reynolds premium chromoly steel

**Gears** Shimano Sora 9-speed 11-32t

**Chainset** FSA

Omega triple

**Brakes** Tektro Spyre mechanical discs

### Wheels

Aluminium rims on Specialized hubs

**Tyres** Specialized Trigger Sport 42c

**Bar/stem** Specialized aluminium

**Seatpost** Specialized aluminium

**Saddle** Specialized Body Geometry Phenom

**Size range** S-XL

**Weight** 13.6kg / 30lb (without racks)

**Extras** Tubus racks front and rear, full mudguards

[www.specialized.com](http://www.specialized.com)





# Stanforth Kibo £1,495

## Flat-bar adventure bike, inspired by real life

**S**tanforth Bikes is a young British bike company started by Simon Stanforth, who has a particularly interesting story. Way back in the depths of the 1980s, Simon's dad and uncle started Saracen bikes, one of the first companies to bring mass-produced mountain bikes to the British public.

Saracen's early coup was to supply bikes to adventurers Richard and Nicholas Crane as they cycled up Mount Kilimanjaro. This left an impression on the young Simon, and the Kibo is his tribute to the machines used by the Cranes back in 1985.

### Frameset

Each Stanforth Kibo is constructed in the UK by respected British bike-builder Lee Cooper using Reynolds 631 steel tubing. Handcrafted touches abound under the shiny black enamel. The tubes are joined with very pretty lugs, although those skinny raked steel forks and anorexic head tube look seriously dated these days. Add to that an old-school quill stem and you may be asking if the retro vibe has gone a little too far.

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	16/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	15/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	15/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>84</b> /100

### ADVICE

#### Steel is real

Why is steel such a great choice for adventure or expedition bikes? There are a few factors, not least that it is strong yet also provides a forgiving ride experience, which is vital when you're spending all day in the saddle. But perhaps more important for true world travellers is the fact that, in almost any town, anywhere in the world, you're likely to find someone with the ability to weld it back together should something break.



### Components

Because it's based on vintage mountain bikes, the Kibo comes with flat bars. That is what really lets this bike down as an adventure tourer as it just does not offer the variety of riding positions you get with drop handlebars. Elsewhere the spec is very sensible. The gearset is a mixture of Shimano Deore at the front and XT rear mech. Gear changes feel secure, and the smallest of the triple chainrings allied with the 34t biggest sprocket would make even the least fit rider feel able to climb Kilimanjaro. Probably.

Another retro plus are SunRace thumb-shifters, especially the one operating the front derailleur. This is friction only, meaning you can feather the mech and completely avoid chain

rub. As for brakes, we had Tektro cantilevers, and despite their old-school looks, they offered reliable enough braking which compared favourably with the AWOL's disc brakes.

### Wheels

Sturdy Rigida Sputnik rims on equally reliable Shimano Deore hubs offer a very strong set of wheels, particularly as these are 26in — just like classic mtbs. Stanforth offers the Kibo with a choice of tyres, depending on whether you want yours to be an urban runaround, tourer or adventure machine. We fitted Schwalbe Marathon Mondials and they coped with road and moderate mixed surfaces very well.



### Riding

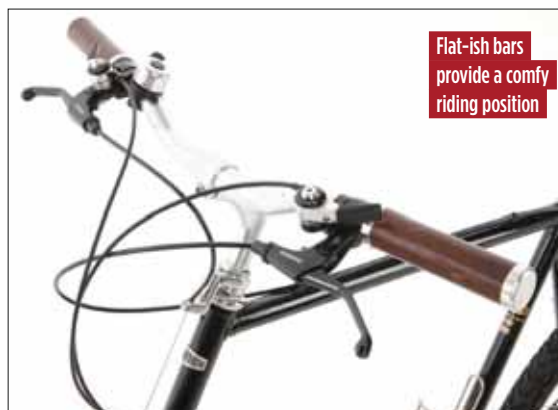
On asphalt, and especially on road climbs, the Kibo suffers. Those smaller wheels can't maintain momentum quite as well, and road riders will really miss road brake hoods to really manhandle the bike upwards.

However, get on to paths, tracks and hardpack trails, and the super-compliant steel frame and lively 26in

wheels come into their own, hopping and skipping over bumps and bobbles. Whatever the situation, it's a very comfortable bike to ride, more suited to serious off-road expeditions than either of the other two bikes in this test.

Anyone who had an mtb back in the late 1980s will find the Kibo inspiring all kinds of memories.

I couldn't help taking it deep off-road into gloop and roots territory. Despite having the wrong rubber fitted, pumped to far too high a pressure, the Kibo and I survived, slipping and sliding. Best of all, we came out grinning.



Flat-ish bars provide a comfy riding position



Brooks saddle will rouse the retro rabble

### Specification

**Frameset** Reynolds

631, handbuilt in UK

**Gears** Shimano Deore

(front mech) and XT

(rear) nine-speed

11-34t

**Chainset** Shimano

Deore triple

**Brakes** Tektro

cantilever

**Wheels** Rigid

Sputnik 26in rims on

Shimano Deore hubs

**Tyres** Schwalbe

Marathon Mondial 2in

**Bar/stem** 62cm riser

bars, Nitto FU82

quill stem

**Seatpost** Aluminium

**Saddle** Brooks B17

**Size range** 19, 21, 22,

23in (bespoke

available at

extra cost)

**Weight** 13.3kg /

29.3lb (without rack)

[www.stanforthbikes.](http://www.stanforthbikes.co.uk)

[co.uk](http://www.stanforthbikes.co.uk)



# Spa Cycles Ti Adventure £1,600

## Classy titanium option from touring experts

**S**pa Cycles in Harrogate is possibly the best-kept secret in the British cycle trade. Actually, that's not quite true — the touring fraternity knows of it well, and for years Spa has been fitting adventurous cyclists to long-distance load-luggers from a wide range of marques.

### Frameset

While Spa has an enticing range of titanium Audax and touring bikes available, this is its brand new titanium adventure bike. In fact, it's so new, we have one of the prototype frames. The frame itself is made from straight-gauge, seamless titanium tubing with a brushed finish, and there are cable guides along the top tube should you want to forget about disc brakes.

Despite coming from established, traditional cycling experts, the frame has a fairly unusual shape, combining a relatively short head tube with a steeply sloped top tube. From the saddle you still feel nice and high, and it looks simply incredible, with some classy touches such as Spa's very subtle branding on the down tube.

### Components

The chaps at Spa Cycles know better than anyone what kit will make these kinds of bikes tick over nicely, so the spec is wonderfully functional; in fact, it's a bit like the AWOL's but with the gremlins ironed out. So we get a Sora front mech, but this time teamed with a more hardy Deore rear derailleur; Shimano BR517 cable-operated disc brakes that work superbly; and there's even one of Spa's excellent Nidd leather saddles.

We opted for the drop-bar version of the Adventure Ti — I think drops are better for tackling road climbs on. However, a straight-bar version is available, too. And should you want to upgrade anything at purchase, Spa Cycles is only too willing to help, most likely offering to save you a small fortune on list price in the process.

### Wheels

Again, Spa's touring knowledge hits the

mark when it comes to the high strength wheelset, and on the Adventure Ti we find Exal DC19 rims hand-built on to Shimano Deore hubs. They're a tough set of hoops, and as with the Stanforth, Schwalbe Marathon Mondials offer a great trade-off between grip and speed. One thing to note is that, while full-size 700c road wheels are fitted to the Adventure Ti's two biggest sizes, the smallest comes with 26in wheels.

### Riding

After the Stanforth Kibo, the Adventure Ti's strengths and weaknesses are particularly apparent. On anything approaching smooth surfaces, including

trails and towpaths, the Spa machine really shines. Actually, take it on the road and you'd be forgiven for thinking you were on a refined touring bike. Like the AWOL, the ride experience is particularly stable and secure — it sounds strange to say, but you quickly forget you're balancing on two wheels.

However, detour on to something more lumpy and bumpy, and shocks do make their way through. I would say it feels a smidgen stiffer than the AWOL, although the upside of that is the Spa is by far the most responsive and efficient bike on test when it comes to reacting to rider effort. Steering is a tad more leisurely than on the Kibo, but it never feels languid. In fact, in the right environment — which doesn't have to be the road — it's an armchair ride.



SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	20/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	20/20
OVERALL RATING	94/100



## Specification

**Frameset** Titanium, brushed finish

**Gears** Shimano Sora (front mech) and Deore (rear mech) nine-speed, 11-32t

**Chainset** XD-2 triple

### Brakes

Shimano BR517 mechanical discs

**Wheels** Exal DC19 rims on Shimano

Deore hubs

**Tyres** Schwalbe Marathon Mondial 40c

**Bar/stem** FSA Wing Compact / FSA

**Seatpost** FSA SL280

### Saddle

Spa Cycles Nidd

### Size range

43, 48, 53cm

**Weight (without racks)** 13.5kg/29.7lb

[www.spacycles.co.uk](http://www.spacycles.co.uk)

## ALTERNATIVE

### On-One Pickenflick Gravel Force 22 £1,599.99

You can count the number of titanium adventure bikes out there on one hand — the only other one we could find was this cyclo-cross focused package from Planet X. The Pickenflick Gravel comes with an 11-speed SRAM Force gearset and Avid BB7 mechanical disc brakes but — and there's a big but — that beautiful Ti frame doesn't feature rack mounts, so you'll be restricted to wearing a rucksack if you want to go exploring. [www.planetx.co.uk](http://www.planetx.co.uk)





**CYCLING  
ACTIVE  
BEST BIKE  
ON TEST**



## And the winner is...

**A**s an adventure bike the Stanforth Kibo impresses and disappoints in equal measure. It's inspired by old school mtbs but to its credit the Kibo satisfies even the most rose-tinted memories of mountain bikes past. And while the steel frame, thumb shifters and canti brakes might not seem modern, they all perform competently. It's a fun retro mtb but it falls down as an adventure bike with its one-position flat bars, sluggish 26in wheels and lack of front rack or mudguards. Upgrading it to adventure spec would be costly and a faff.

We started this test with the Specialized AWOL Elite primarily because I wanted to see how a globally respected brand, with all its research and development resources, approached the concept of

an adventure cycle. Of course, companies such as Genesis have proven that mass-market bikes can take on the world, but even so, I was still impressed by the AWOL's ability.

However, we must recognise that manufacturers such as Specialized do have to appeal to a wider range of buyers than specialist brands such as Stanforth and Spa, and the AWOL is designed to be just as enticing to commuters as it is longer-distance tourers. So, while I could easily imagine some lucky rider using the AWOL to explore Europe or cross America, I would say it's just a little short of true expedition performance off the peg.

The Spa Cycles Adventure Ti takes a lot of what the AWOL offers and refines it almost to the point

where it can get no better. True, it has a slightly firmer ride than the other bikes on test, but it is also the most luxurious package, offering simply startling quality throughout. From the minute you hop aboard, you're aware that this is a very special machine. In truth, if it was my money — and knowing I'll probably never really ride up a mountain or across a desert — it's the bike I would buy.

But if there's a message behind this test, it's not which bike is best; after all, all three are very worthy long-distance load-luggers. More important is the idea that bikes don't have to be built for sportives. These incredible machines can provide just as much joy and excitement, albeit in a slightly different way — there's a big ol' world out there.



### SPECIALIZED AWOL ELITE



92/100

#### Spot on...

- Great steel frame from a mass-market brand
- Comfortable, smooth, and very stable

#### Near miss

- Underwhelming disc brakes
- Could be a bit more robust for true adventuring

### STANFORTH KIBO



84/100

#### Spot on...

- Hand built Reynolds 631 frame
- Clever spec with everything working well
- 26in wheels are strong and lively

#### Near miss

- We'd love to see it with drop bars

### SPA CYCLE TI ADVENTURE



94/100

#### Spot on...

- Ti frame at fantastic price
- Incredible quality throughout
- Very plush ride on anything approaching smooth surfaces

#### Near miss

- Not so compliant over bumpy terrain

## ALTERNATIVES

### Genesis Croix de Fer 20

£1,199.99

Genesis helped reinvigorate steel-tubed bikes, certainly among the mass market, and the Croix de Fer was the bike that led the way for drop-bar adventure cycles. This 20 model is the spiritual successor of that original and comes with a Reynolds 725 chromoly frame, Shimano Tiagra gearset and TRP HyRd cable/hydraulic hybrid disc brakes.

[www.genesisbikes.co.uk](http://www.genesisbikes.co.uk)



### Thorn Sherpa £1,299

A company that has garnered huge respect for its touring bikes, and especially its Rohloff hub-geared machines, Thorn also has this fantastic 26in-wheeled steel adventure bike in its catalogue. The Sherpa can be specified with either straight or drop bars and there are four choices of reliable Shimano gearing, including an ultra-low option for truly tricky terrain. Strong Rígida Grizzly rims on Shimano Deore hubs complete the package.

[www.thorncycles.co.uk](http://www.thorncycles.co.uk)



### Oxford Bike Works

Expedition £2,050

Based around a Reynolds 525 chromoly steel frame, the Expedition from Oxford Bike Works uses a combination of top-quality components and easily replaceable parts to be a very sensible world travelling option. Shimano Deore V-brakes and gears offer ultra-reliable function and Rígida Sputnik rims on Shimano XT hubs make for resilient wheels.

[www.oxfordbikeworks.co.uk](http://www.oxfordbikeworks.co.uk)





# 7 OF THE BEST

# Chamois creams

**No cyclist wants to suffer from saddle sores or chafing, so we've tested seven different chamois creams to keep you comfortable when riding**

Words Louise Mahé

Originally the padded part of cycling shorts, the crucial bit that protects you from sitting directly on the saddle, was made of chamois leather. Despite being typically made of synthetic materials these days it's still known as the chamois, or padded insert.

Even with the improvement in materials used and fit, some people, especially those riding regularly, still experience chafing that can lead to

saddle sores. Alongside this, repeated washing of your kit can harden the padded insert, which again can cause discomfort.

Luckily there are now specialist creams we can use to help reduce friction and soreness, while most contain ingredients to reduce bacteria and soothe any pre-existing tenderness.

Chamois cream application can be done in two ways. Before riding it can be applied directly

to the skin on the saddle contact points or where you're likely to chafe — being careful of those delicate areas. Similarly, you can rub it into a freshly washed chamois to help keep it soft and lubricated before you head out on a long ride. Another tip here is to never wear a pair of shorts twice without washing them in between, because even chamois cream can't get rid of high levels of bacteria.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Ingredients

What separates specific chamois cream from regular moisturising products is the ingredients that help to reduce bacteria, and clean, repair and soothe the skin. Many use similar ingredients to do this, but before buying it's important to ensure there's nothing that you're allergic to in the cream. Some creams contain menthol, which gives a 'cooling' effect; however, some people find this quite an odd sensation. It may be something you don't particularly like so be aware when choosing creams.

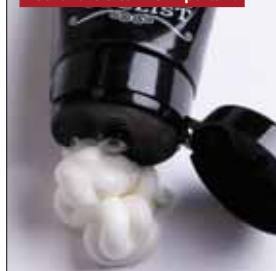
### Feel

As well as the feeling the ingredients can create, such as the chilling menthol effect, there's also the feel

### Check what's in the cream



### Feel of the cream is important



### Squeezy tube is easy to use



of the actual cream to consider. Some creams can be quite sloppy and somewhat slimy which may be an issue if you want to apply quite a bit.

Other creams can feel greasy and thick, but may often stay on better on endurance rides.

### Container

It may sound odd but the container used to hold the chamois cream can make or break the product. Whilst a container where you can dip your hand in is easy to use, this can often lead to 'double dipping'. After applying and realising you don't quite have enough don't put the same hand back in, as this can spread nasty bacteria. We much prefer tubes where you can control the amount you're squeezing out.



## Spiuk Anti-Chafing Cream £15.99

For the price this tube is tiny and only contains 50ml of cream, meaning you're not getting much product for your money. Spiuk's offering is quite thick though, meaning less cream needs to be applied before riding. The thickness of this clear cream meant that it stayed put for longer, so was great on bigger rides as it was still giving protection after a good few hours. The thickness of the cream creates a barrier against moisture, so the covering

was not jeopardised on rainy rides or hot and sweaty summer outings.

7

**A solid cream, in more ways than one, but is quite pricy for its size**



www.silverfish-uk.com

## Elite Ozone Protective £13.99

Elite gives the option of getting this cream in a tube or tub. We opted for the tube which gave a precise squeeze of cream and no worries of spreading bacteria. The cream

itself smelt nice and it was of a good consistency, making it easy to apply. It didn't seem as effective as others on test and appeared to have dissipated after just two hours of riding, but after applying a little more it fared better. The specifically formulated ingredients not only prevent chafing but protect against bacteria build-up.

7

**Overall an OK cream with specific ingredients that prevent bacteria build-up**



www.madison.co.uk

## Udderly Smooth £9.99

Coming in a big tub, containing 227g, this greaseless cream is perfect for those wanting chamois cream on most rides. The shea butter ingredient gives it quite a strong odour, but if you don't mind this, the cream is great. Its thick consistency meant it gave a solid barrier against rain and reduced chafing effectively without rubbing off as we rode. At just £9.99 Udderly

Smooth is one of the cheaper creams on test, the only downside is the tub container, which encourages double dipping and spreading bacteria.

9

**If you don't mind the odour this is an extremely effective and protective cream**



udderlysmooth.co.uk

**CYCLING ACTIVE  
BEST ON A BUDGET**

## Assos £13.99

Assos's cream contains a menthol ingredient meaning we felt that chilly tingling effect after applying. This soon subsided, or possibly we got used to it, but it was noticeable that the cream was still there as it has quite a squelchy feeling. This cream lasted for a decent amount of time as we rode, giving great lubrication for around two hours. With almond oil and witch hazel

properties, it kept us feeling protected when riding. Assos encourages applying the cream in freshly washed chamois, as well as to the skin, to keep the chamois soft and lubricated.

10

**The tingly menthol effect means it's a love/hate cream that is very effective**



www.yellow-limited.com



## Paceline Chamois Butt'r Original £12.99



Paceline offers a variety of different Butt'rs; its women's one uses different ingredients with its pH balance to suit females, while its 'Eurostyle' option contains menthol and witch hazel to give a soothing effect. We tested the Original Butt'r and it didn't disappoint. When a liberal amount was applied, the cream lasted long into a ride, giving lubrication and protection from chafing. With no odour Paceline's Original Butt'r suits those that don't want any flowery or menthol smells. The consistency gave a comfortable feel when applied, and wasn't too sloppy or hard to rub on.

U

Great cream and with a range of different Butt'rs there's something for everyone in Paceline's range

www.2pure.co.uk

**CYCLING  
ACTIVE  
GROUP TEST  
WINNER**

## Morgan Blue Soft £10.95

This soft cream is meant for dry rides during spring and summer months, Morgan Blue also offers a 'solid' cream which is better for wet wintry rides. We found this cream sloppy, so much so it was hard to put on the skin. It was easier to rub into the chamois itself, which still worked and reduced chafing. The liquid consistency of the cream meant it felt rather wet initially, which is never a nice feeling. However,

we did feel the cream worked well during rides, reducing any excess rubbing and soreness.

7

Best used on dry days, this cream was not as easy to apply as others we tested and left an uncomfortable, wet feeling on our skin



www.windwave.co.uk

## Chapeau Original £11.99

Chapeau's cream comes in a nice big 200ml tube and at just £11.99 this means you're getting a lot of bang for your



buck. With the option of a menthol version, those who like that tingly 'soothing' feeling are also catered for, too. We tested the original version, which was a decent thickness and white in colour, making it easy to see where it was applied. After a few hours' riding it did seem to run low, just when we started to need it, so applying a little more on those longer rides may be necessary.

U

This thicker cream did need extra application for longer rides but was effective enough

www.chapeau.cc

## VERDICT



With a wide range of chamois creams available it can be hard to know which will work best. Many of the creams performed to a similar level and would work well, giving protection on rides of up to two hours on a fairly regular basis.

That said there were two stand-out creams for us on this test: Paceline's Original Butt'r and Udderly Smooth's offering. While we found Paceline Original Butt'r was of a decent consistency and was effective at protecting us on longer rides, we really liked the fact that there are other options within its range. This means you can really tailor your choice depending on personal preference and needs. The slight change in ingredients means you'll get the same consistency and non-greasy feel with a slight personalisation.

Udderly Smooth's cream also fared very well on test, as the thick cream gave great protection against chafing, even on long rides. The only downside was the odour, though some might not mind this, and the tub style pot. However, the amount you get for £9.99 is impressive and it should last you a long time.



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# Carbon sports bikes

## Genesis v Raleigh

Words Matt Levett Pictures Chris Catchpole

### No mudguards

Bikes designed for fast road riding have smaller clearance around the wheels, so will not take larger section tyres or mudguards, not even the clip-on type. Don't expect fittings for anything but your bottle cages.

### Internal cable routing

The nature of the material makes this pretty much a standard feature on carbon road bikes. It keeps things tidy, has aero advantages and will keep your cables out of the elements.

**Raleigh Criterium Race** £1,600



**H**ere we have two carbon road bikes from brands held in some affection by British cyclists. Genesis has established itself as a maker of distinctive, high-quality and good-value bicycles across a number of genres. It continues the racing tradition with the Madison-Genesis team. Initially producing bikes in traditional steel, including its high-end Volare racing machines, Genesis has now ventured into carbon and has produced a range of performance road bikes. We're testing the second in the range of six, the Zero 2.

Though no longer technically a British-owned brand Raleigh is inextricably linked to Nottingham and to the times when its bikes were ubiquitous on British streets. It has a proud racing heritage and some iconic bike liveries. Raleigh's fortunes may have waxed and waned over the years but it has continued to have produced some quality products.

Earlier bikes command enough respect to be re-launched as heritage ranges and Raleigh's new models are bang up to date. We're testing the top model in a small range of value performance carbon road bikes, the Raleigh Criterium Race.

#### Bikes on test

The bikes on test are both sports bikes, they're based on a road racing template, but they offer a much wider range of riding than all-out competition. There is plenty of scope to alter the riding position for a bit more comfort over speed, or vice-versa.

These are quick bikes though. They're full-carbon frame and fork and well-equipped. They're ideal if you want to get around a sportive or challenge ride in a top time, do some serious training or just some good fun, fast riding. There are no fittings for mudguards so they're not real all-rounders, but they do

have enough clearance for 25c tyres — scope for a bit of winter riding and some rough roads.

Price-wise they're hovering around the £1,500-£1,600 mark so we're expecting bikes that are up to the job straight out of the box.

## £1,600 carbon road bikes

### What to expect

- Full-carbon fork (blades and steerer)
- Mid to high-end components
- Wheels may be your first upgrade
- More generic alloy contact points

**Genesis Zero 2** £1,499.99



### Performance specification

Bikes of this price and purpose will be kitted out with mid to high range components. They'll either use a complete groupset or a mix of a couple of ranges — sometimes making small economies where they'll least affect performance.



# Genesis Zero 2 £1,499.99

**Spritley offering from Genesis with an impressive spec sheet**

**W**e had slightly mixed feelings about the new Zero range of carbon road bikes from Genesis — the company having always been such an avid cheerleader of steel as a frame-building material.

But more often than not our experience of Genesis products has been that of innovation, quality and value, so really there was a lot to be excited about when it started producing a range of carbon frames. Particularly as the Zero range descends directly from a pro-level race bike in the Zero Team. We tested the second model in the arsenal, the Zero 2, which Genesis itself suggests may be the best value bike in the family.

## Frameset

This is a race-ready, full-carbon frame and it looks the part. Each model in the Zero range comes in a different colourway. The Zero 2 is an elegant mix of dark carbon, grey and orange details. Like the Raleigh Criterium there is a flat surface on the top tube and lots of shape-shifting and plenty of material around the BB area.

The full carbon monocoque fork has a steerer that tapers in from 1 1/8 inch to 1 1/5 inch and it tucks aerodynamically into a cutaway at the join of the down tube and head tube.

Like the Raleigh, the rear triangle of the Zero is skinnier for a little extra comfort and the seatstays are offset with the end of the top tube, joining it just in front of the seat tube, in a shape reminiscent of some GT and BMC bikes.

The Zero 2 has fully internal cable routing and is designed to use a BB86 press-fit bottom bracket. This system uses internal bearings but can be used in conjunction with the same Shimano and FSA components that fit the widely-used outboard bottom bracket systems. This allows Genesis the full choice of, among others, Shimano's range of chainsets.

## Components

Like many good-value road bikes the Genesis Zero 2's drivetrain is built around Shimano's 11-speed 105, with the ever-improving workhorse range providing the shifter and mechs. The mid-compact chainset is a slightly less sexy, but perfectly adequate RS500. The



Understated decals finish a classy package

**“The Zero is a very lively ride with plenty of road noise and feedback”**

brakes use similarly generic Shimano R561 calipers. These are both evidence of where small economies have been made, allowing Genesis to offer this kind of value. But a full 105 groupset would have been a nice touch on this bike.

All of the finishing kit, including aluminium bars, stem, seatpost and saddle are Genesis's own brand.

## Wheels

The wheels again fall behind the general specification of the bike and certainly the frame. Fulcrum's Racing Sport wheels have slipped in at the bottom of its existing range, which already features some value options, so we weren't necessarily expecting too much from them. But, while we can't vouch for the longevity, they rolled along pretty well and didn't feel unduly flexy. Of course they're ripe for an upgrade — they'll be adding weight and won't be the stiffest or strongest wheels by any means — but so far we've been pleasantly surprised. The tyres also represent a budget strand of a quality brand. We love Continental's Grand Prix 4000s and Four Seasons tyres

Ultra Sport tyres don't always inspire confidence



but the Zero 2 comes fitted with Conti's budget Ultra Sport. These do offer some grip and don't feel like they're impeding the ride. In the past we've experienced a bit of vulnerability in the Ultra Sport, in other words, lots of punctures. But these 25c versions have so far done OK.

## Riding

The Genesis Zero 2 is a very lively ride. Compared with the Raleigh, there is a lot more road noise and feedback, but not to the extent that it becomes a harsh ride. It is also noticeably softer when dealing with large impacts than many other race frames, including the Criterium Race.

There is plenty of power transfer though, and the Zero accelerates quickly and is sharp in the turns. It climbs really well and, while it's no heavyweight anyway, feels like a lighter bike on the slopes. The ride of the Genesis Zero 2 really belies the value elements of the build as the quality of the Road Race frame really shines through.

## Specification

**Frameset** Carbon  
Road Race, Full  
Carbon AAF  
Integrated Advanced  
Aero Fork  
**Gears** Shimano 105  
11-speed  
**Chainset** Shimano FC  
RS500 52/36  
**Brakes** Shimano R-561  
**Wheels** Fulcrum  
Racing Sport  
**Tyres** Continental  
Ultra Sport 25c  
**Bars** Genesis  
Road Compact  
**Stem** Genesis Road  
**Saddle** Genesis Road  
**Seatpost** Genesis 27.2  
**Weight** 8.36kg /  
18.4lb  
**Size tested** S  
[www.genesisbikes.co.uk](http://www.genesisbikes.co.uk)

## ADVICE

### Mid-compact chainsets

Our choice of chainsets has changed quite significantly over recent years. Not so long ago all road bikes came with a standard racing double (typically 53/39t) and riders had to brazen it out on the hills, or fit a triple chainset. Then came the compact 50/34, making climbing easier but not offering the largest gears. Eleven-speed set-ups mean that manufacturers can now offer a larger spread of gears on the rear cassette without large, uncomfortable jumps. But we now also have mid-compact chainsets, essentially a cross between the racing and compact choices, typically offering a 52-tooth large ring and a 36 inner ring.

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	17/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	19/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>92</b> /100





# Raleigh Criterium Race £1,600

## 21st century toy from a legendary manufacturer

**R**aleigh offers a broad range of performance road bikes with its Militis family. Above the £1.5k mark, carbon frames replace aluminium, hitting the £2k mark with the Militis Pro. Within the £1,000 to £1,600 price bracket, the firm offers a range of three full-carbon value road bikes, with the Criterium Race at the top.

It's a pretty striking bike; the red, yellow and black colour scheme give a strong nod towards Raleigh's celebrated road racing heritage. But while it's nostalgic — with the livery, clever use of the Raleigh logotype and original head badge — this is not a retro bike. In fact, it's anything but; the Criterium is unequivocally a 21st century machine.

### Frameset

You're sure to be noticed on the Criterium Race. The bold, bright monocoque frame comprises fat, oversized tubes in yellow, with red and black details and a Raleigh logo on the top side of the down tube.

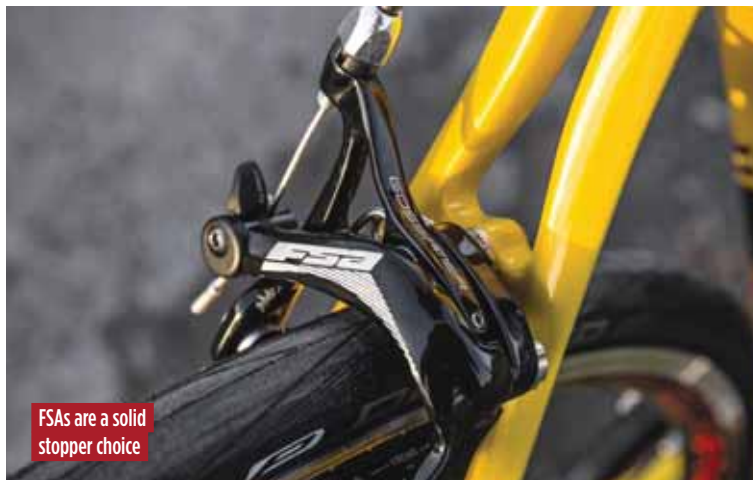
The frameset is strongly sculpted, with a little aero detail on the front of the head tube and a sharp 'crease' running down the fork blades, along the sides of the top tube and along the seatstays. The tubes flatten and taper to provide maximum contact, and thus rigidity, at their junctions. The down tube flares out to meet a very large bottom bracket shell, while the flattened chainstays and skinnier seatstays provide a little more comfort and compliance at the back end.

The Criterium Race has full internally routed cabling, double bottle bosses and a full-carbon fork that sits in an integrated headset. It's a race-biased machine; there are no fittings for mudguards, racks, or anything that doesn't involve riding quickly. But there is just enough clearance for a fairly fat, 25c training tyre.

## ADVICE

### Tyre choice

A specific tyre can't do everything brilliantly. Anyone who watches Formula One will know that compromises must be made when choosing between optimum grip, speed and wear. On a bike, we want good grip and low rolling resistance. Many tyres are good at providing both, but there's also longevity and puncture resistance to think about. In winter conditions, the risk of punctures is greater; a good set of winter tyres helps avoid the grim task of roadside tube changes. Winter tyres are heavier and can diminish road feel. Our advice: invest in a solid set for winter and something sportier for summer.



**“With a bottom bracket this stiff, every drop of power goes directly through the drivetrain”**

### Components

The Criterium Race is very well specced for a £1,600 bike. It has not one groupset but a pleasing mix of two brands. Shimano's second-tier Ultegra takes care of the 11-speed shifters and rear and front derailleurs, while the chainset, brake calipers and bottom bracket are from FSA's Energy range. The finishing kit is a little more workmanlike, but certainly up to the job, with RSA alloy stem, handlebar and seatpost, and a Selle Royal saddle.

### Wheels

We're accustomed to bikes coming with wheels of a slightly lower specification than the frame and the rest of the kit. The Criterium Pro is no exception — you may well want to upgrade the wheels if you want to race or push the bike to its maximum performance. That said, the Cole Rollen Lite wheels supplied are not bad. They're strong and stiff and not particularly heavy. They roll really well and, even if you were to upgrade, they'd make an ideal second set of wheels for training and winter riding. They look pretty good too.

The Schwalbe Durano tyres are a well considered choice too. They performed well during a somewhat inclement test period. They're fat and grippy with excellent puncture protection, though that requires a certain compromise. Tyres as grippy and robust as the Duranos, as good as they are, cannot be the best in outright performance terms, for acceleration and climbing.

### Riding

For a bike named after a form of racing that is frantic and uncompromising, the



Raleigh Criterium Race is a remarkably well-behaved bike. The rigidity through the fork, head tube and bottom bracket area does mean you get quite a clout from any large bumps and holes in the road. Otherwise, the ride is very comfortable indeed, with very little vibration from the road. It is a quick bike too. With a bottom bracket this stiff, every drop of power goes directly through the drivetrain. The Criterium whooshes up to speed in Rolls Royce style, though; it doesn't exactly fly off the line. It's well-behaved in corners and climbs fairly well too.

Raleigh has a specific endurance range in the Revenio, but the low-drama, speed and comfort combination of the Criterium Race puts it in a similar field. Which is no bad thing. This bike is ideal for long, fast rides and sportives, though riders hoping it will live up to its name may find it a bit tame.

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	18/20
BUILD QUALITY	17/20
ROAD HANDLING	18/20
RIDE COMFORT	18/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	19/20
OVERALL RATING	<b>90</b> /100

## Specification

**Frameset:** Criterium Endurance Blend monocoque carbon, Criterium carbon composite fork  
**Gears:** Shimano Ultegra 11-speed  
**Chainset:** FSA Energy 52/36  
**Brakes:** FSA Energy  
**Wheels:** Cole Rollen Lite  
**Tyres:** Schwalbe Durano 25c  
**Bars:** RSP  
**Stem:** RSP  
**Saddle:** Selle Royal Seta S1  
**Seatpost:** RSP  
**Weight:** 8.4kg / 18.6lb  
**Size tested:** 5 (Raleigh Size System) (54cm)  
[www.raleigh.co.uk](http://www.raleigh.co.uk)





Striking colour scheme and neat internal cabling



Rigid bottom bracket produces optimum power





## Genesis turns it on again

**W**e enjoyed riding the Raleigh Criterium Race and the Genesis Zero 2. There was a lot that impressed on both bikes — not least the level of specification that you can now get on a full carbon bike at these prices.

One little extra surprise was the wheelsets on the bikes. Here at *Cycling Active* we often lament the entry-level wheels that ship on otherwise well-specced bikes. These bikes were no exception, in that they both had budget wheelsets, but we actually had no complaints with either. The Cole Rollens on the Raleigh are a good set of winter or training wheels and the Fulcrums on the Genesis, while being a real entry-level set, gave us a pretty good ride.

The drivetrain specification on the Raleigh is particularly impressive at this price point, with the Shimano Ultegra and FSA Energy mix showing no signs of penny-pinching.

But the ride was a little bit tame for a performance bike. It felt more like an endurance model, restrained, comfortable and with less feedback from the road, making it ideal, in fact, for the sportive or big-mileage rider, or just those seeking a little more comfort. Its quality build means there would be no pressing need to upgrade anything. We did feel, however, that the winter tyres deadened the ride a little.

But the Genesis Zero 2 wins out on this test. The component build on the Zero was not as impressive as that of the Raleigh but it served its purposes perfectly well. Shimano 105 is always welcome as the basis of a build; it was just a little bit of a shame that the shifters and derailleurs weren't matched by the brakes and chain. A full 105 groupset would have added a little something to the Zero 2, not least visually.

But we loved the immediacy of the ride on the Genesis. It's fast, responsive and agile and had just that little bit more feedback to make it feel like a performance bike. It has a small weight advantage over the Raleigh but it felt like a lot more.

In fact this test was a great illustration of how bikes made from the same material can give remarkably different rides. Both the Raleigh and the Genesis felt like good bikes and in the end there is a strong element of personal preference. Some may be looking for the slightly silkier feel of the Raleigh. But for us

the Genesis really lived up to the performance bike tag and the feel of a real quality carbon frameset was very much in evidence. One thing is for sure: at this price point, even from established brands you can get a very good bike for your money.

**GENESIS ZERO 2**  
£1,499.99



### Spot on...

- Great frame and fork
- Exciting ride
- Wheelset punches above its weight

### Near miss

- Bit of cable rattle
- Full 105 would have been nice

**RALEIGH CRITERIUM RACE** £1,600



### Spot on...

- Looks fantastic
- Great specification
- Smooth ride

### Near miss

- Finishing kit a bit budget by comparison
- Perhaps a bit tame for its Criterium moniker

The Zero's our hero thanks to its aggressive, punchy ride





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<b>London to Southend Off-Road</b>	<b>Sun 23 August</b>
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# BIG

## ideas Small wheels

**Moulton has endured for over 50 years thanks to the singular vision of its creator and in spite of the somewhat unconventional looks of its bikes**

**M**ention Moulton to people of a certain age and the reactions are mixed: "Are they making bikes again?" "Is someone using the brand name?" "My mum had one, for the shopping."

Moulton has heritage, for sure. It was a small part of the swinging Sixties, a British company with a bicycle unlike any other — small wheels, a unique F-shape frame, full suspension. It was Britain's second-largest bicycle manufacturer, behind Raleigh, making and selling hundreds of bikes a week. Then its star dimmed. The general populace forgot it but it never died. Instead, like Dr Who, it has regenerated itself several times.

Today you can buy Moultons, handmade at its Wiltshire base, and see the result of 50 years of continued R&D. They are high-end models, finished at the rate of fewer than 10 a week. Most are exported to Japan, Thailand, South Korea, China and Singapore, but CA has managed to get its hands, feet and bum on to a unique model, a modern replica of the original, extraordinary Moulton track bike (pictured left).

Words: Max Glaskin Photos: Daniel Gould, Moulton archive, Christopher Catchpole





## Scared? What, me?

I could have opted for any one of the dozens of ways to enjoy cycling — sportives, touring, mountain biking, time trials, commuting or even an Audax event. There are Moultons that can handle them all and I'd willingly have had a bash at each.

Instead, I was presented with the unique model — a small-wheeler designed specifically for track racing. My breath was taken away, not just by the stunning bike but also by the realisation of which discipline I'd have to brave.

No brakes. No gears. No freewheel. My head said "no" three times and in some cultures that is legally binding. The skeletal white frame, the chainring almost as large as the wheels, the miniscule sprocket — which was crazier, the machine or the person who rides it?

Yet, the allure of trying another model from this unique British marque was too strong. Contrary to Einstein's theory that only massive objects exert an irresistible gravitational force, this tiny, ultra-light machine dragged me in at warp factor six.

It was inevitable that soon we'd be together in orbit around the oldest existing velodrome in Britain. The track in Preston Park, Brighton, was built by the army in 1877, though thankfully the original cinders were replaced 80 years ago with tarmac. It's an odd length, 579 metres, with two banked corners and nowhere for a track novice to hide from the gaze of other riders and passers-by.

To say I was ginger is an understatement. The bike is so special I feared it would be damaged if I made a mistake, or so I told people. That was a partial truth. My main worry was that, without the chance to brake or freewheel, I'd crash and damage myself.

The recently renewed track-side fence offered some comfort. I held on as I clipped in to the pedals and pushed off. Feet and wheels were locked together in motion. I took it slowly at first and was helped in this by the gearing of the large chainring.

An experienced trackie came alongside, eyes popping in astonishment and his mouth twitching between a grin and a gasp. Like a true devotee, he wanted to pick up the Moulton so I slowed warily, unclipped, planted my feet and stepped off, unscathed.

Having weighed the bike in his hands, he advised me on how to stay safe on the track, some of it clearly self-serving. Don't follow his wheel. Don't ride just ahead of him. Think 200 metres ahead. Don't run over dogs. I took it on board but suspected my adviser may not be the best, particularly as he mentioned he'd broken both hips and a shoulder in his time.

So I set off again, with him riding shotgun beside me. After a couple of cautious laps we turned up the speed. The small wheels accelerated swiftly and, before I knew it, I was flying along, legs going like James Brown's when he was feeling particularly good. Following the blue line round the banked curves, keeping up the cadence on the back straight incline, watching for stray dogs.

It was amazing, my fears confounded. The bike behaved, I broke a sweat and got a sense of why seemingly sensible people are seduced by the track.



Clean design honed over the years



No freewheeling with this drivetrain



Speed merchant: a record from 1986



The Moulton can more than hold its own on the track

**380**  
No. of different  
frame jigs

The reason for this one-off can be explained if you visit the picturesque town of Bradford-on-Avon, slip through a couple of side streets and unlock a door set into a high garden wall. Inside the door frame are small metal plates bearing the initials AM — from Dr Alex Moulton, the engineer behind the company.

You'll find yourself in the leafy grounds of the Hall, a Jacobean mansion that had been the Moulton family home. It's now lived in by the trustees of the Moulton Trust and their families. Meanwhile, round the back, in the former stables, the bicycles are built.

### Attention to detail

I first came here almost 30 years ago, to interview Dr Moulton about his remarkable AM-series space-frame, separable small wheelers. I'd never met anyone who spent so long collecting their thoughts before answering the simplest of questions. I hope it was a symptom of his famous attention to detail and not boredom.

He lent me an AM7 for a tour of Argyll; the pleasure from riding it past Loch Etive has stayed with me. Soon after, when mountain biking was in its youth, the ATB model raised muddy eyebrows as it was the first full-suspension off-roader anyone had seen.





Moulton's classic lattice-tubed road bike

More Moultons emerged, to serve the less rule-bound triathlon market and to satisfy the continually enquiring, engineer's mind of Alex Moulton. The man behind the marque died in 2012, aged 96. In his lifetime the Hydrolastic and Hydragas suspension systems he'd invented had softened the ride of 12-million Minis, Maxis, Metros and other cars — and on thousands of his bikes. The company persists and the spare, lithe track bike shows the business is

looking to prosper.

"When I joined Moulton three years ago I wanted to tackle the issue of low brand awareness, with initiatives that didn't necessarily involve creating new bicycles for an already busy range," says Steven Harvey, who is responsible for sales and marketing.

He's keen to show the public that, when it first appeared in the 60s with its new frame shape, the Moulton broke records and won races. Without

harking back to old glories, he wants to pay homage and look forward.

"So I requested that we build a concept bike to celebrate the exciting and surprising events of April 11, 1963 at the Butt's Track, Coventry, when the small wheelers beat the big wheelers by a comfortable margin."

### UCI ban

Then they were banned by the UCI, the sport's governing body. Despite accepting electronic shifting, carbon-fibre and other more recent innovations, the UCI's ban on small wheelers is still in place. So Moulton's opportunities to prove itself against more conventional designs are limited. The plans for the replica track bike sidesteps the problem neatly.

"The hope is to get it onto emblematic race tracks and see how it performs," says Harvey. He's approached all of his overseas distributors to let them know about this initiative, not as a standard sale item but as a flag-bearing concept bike. Using very lightweight steel for the main body of the track bike, and carbon blades, they produced a fixed gear, F-frame Moulton 2kg lighter than any bike they'd made before.

The strategy is for Moulton clubs around the world (of which there are many, especially in Asia) to buy



Moultons are popular with customers in the Far East

## Exotic origins

Where does the Moulton Bicycle Company get its materials?

Steel tubing..... Japan  
Stainless steel tubing.....USA  
Rims..... Taiwan  
Carbon-fibre..... Romania  
Leather..... Smethwick



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Shaun Moulton proudly shows off his wares

## Due diligence

**Moulton Bicycle Co. Ltd**

Staff: 15

Annual turnover: £1 million

Annual production: 300+ bikes

Average retail price: £3,500

"Man should make things — make a profit, of course, but don't take the money gain as the prime judgement." *Dr Alex Moulton*

packs of four that could be raced in events synchronised around the world. "I envisage a starter gun going off at the Olympic velodrome here in the UK, and simultaneously having a Hong Kong team race a Tokyo team race a Bangkok team race a Singapore team race a German team," says Harvey. "A mini league could be created. I thought it would look great, be good fun, speak to a greater audience, and who knows, maybe even race against big-wheelers."

The goal is to show people that small wheeled bikes with high pressure tyres and some suspension can produce top performances when given a chance. It's a challenge. So far Zeb Kyffin, a 16-year-old who's won races on other Moultons, has taken the track bike to London's Olympic Velodrome, mixing it with some big wheelers. It was filmed for Michael Clifford's documentary, *Bicycle*.

Harvey is looking for the next break to show off the Moulton track bike. "The question is 'where next?'

## "Our customers are sensible. One Moulton bike can meet their needs for commuting, touring and sport"

and, more importantly, can we find tracks in these overseas locations that would like to host such races?"

It would be utterly wrong to give the impression that Moultons are now all about competition. For decades they've been used for long-distance touring and urban commuting. It's something to do with their stowability — having small wheels and, for many of the models, separable frames.

I once checked an AM 7 as hold luggage at Gatwick, in its bag, for a flight to Dublin. In the event, the plane was a tiny 12-seater and, just before take-off, the baggage handler came aboard, carrying the bag, and placed it carefully on the seat behind me, not forgetting to buckle its seatbelt.

### Feedback

"The stowability is one reason why Moultons are popular in Japan. They have small apartments and cars," says Harvey, who lived there for many years. "Engineering excellence is also big there and they like the Britishness. Our customers are loyal but, unfortunately for us, they're too sensible to own more than one of our bikes at a time. One Moulton bicycle can meet all their needs for commuting, touring and sport."

We were talking in an office which is like a shrine to the inventor and his creation. Most surfaces are covered with photos, paintings, cuttings, trophies, frame badges, framed letters and at least eight bikes spanning 50 years of production. A small display case goes back even further, showing

handmade models of other bicycle concepts that Moulton rejected.

It's where I'd met Dr Moulton three decades ago and I seem to remember that, back then, everything was in its place, laid out like a design studio, including engineers' drawing boards. Today the designs are done on computer. "For other British bike makers, the CAD [computer aided design] files are sent to the Far East for development and manufacturing," says Dan Farrell, "But that wouldn't result in a very good feedback loop for us. I can make a drawing here, show it to people who know about engineering design and about Moultons and get feedback right away."

Farrell's now in charge of all design and technical changes so this system helps him maintain the vigilance he learned since first working for Alex Moulton as an industrial design undergraduate on a placement 20 years earlier. When he graduated he was employed full time, moved into a houseboat on the Kennet and Avon Canal and started buying the products from the company store.

How many Moultons does he now own? His lengthy pause was reminiscent of Dr Moulton. Finally he said, "I don't think it's less than 10."

But what about normal, sorry, large-wheeled bikes? As a designer he must keep an eye on the alternatives, surely?

"I didn't ride one for 10 years," he says. "I've since had three and sold them all, including an Italian handbuilt model. I rode it once. Sold it." **End**



Labour of love: a bike is handcrafted



# 3 OF THE BEST

# CO2 canister pumps

**A mini gas inflator can save you a lot of time and hassle when you need to fix a puncture, and even leave your tyre more firm for the rest of your ride. We put three inflators to the test**

Words Louise Mahé

**G**etting a puncture is a nuisance; the faff of having to change a tube by the side of the road is always an inconvenience. If you're running late or it's a chilly day this multiplies into a very unpleasant experience.

One way to speed up having to deal with a puncture is investing in a specific mini gas inflator. This means you won't be standing there struggling to pump your tyre back up with a mini-pump and it'll end up a lot firmer, making it

easier to continue your ride.

Gas inflators use small disposable CO2 canisters, which come in varying sizes, to re-inflate your tyre. It makes life a lot simpler and can half the time it takes to repair a puncture. If you're out with a group of friends and it's a bit chilly this will be much appreciated as there's less standing around getting cold. Similarly if you're a commuter using a gas canister means when disaster strikes you needn't worry about turning

up half an hour late to work.

Once you've forked out on the inflator you'll need some additional spare canisters to save for later — these are generally only a couple of pounds to buy when you run out, or you can buy in bulk. Most products will come with one or more to get your started.

We found three of the best gas inflators and put them to the test, to see which fared best at getting us back riding quickly and without stress.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Size

Most inflators are small mechanisms that connect to the valve and transfer CO2 into the tyre. Even with the CO2 canister they are smaller than most pumps and can tuck away easily in a pocket or saddle pack. The canisters come in different sizes depending on how much CO2 it contains. We found 16g canisters a good size, with plenty of CO2 to pump one road tyre to a decent pressure.

### Ease of use

The main reason people use gas canisters is because they're so quick and easy to use. That said, some are simpler to work than others. Most just screw

#### Check the size of the canister



#### Known for ease of use



#### Use the dial to control the gas



on the canister and you're good to go, using the release mechanism to actually get the air into the tyre. The simplest canisters just press on, though some involve screwing the inflator onto the valve, which can be fiddly, especially with cold hands.

### Control

While being quick and easy to use is the whole idea of gas inflators, there still needs to be some kind of control as it inflates the tyre. Some inflators just require you to push to inflate, while others have small dials to twist to release the gas into the tyre. Some press-to-inflate mechanisms can be quite erratic, while you must ensure the dials are in the 'off' position when you screw the cartridges in on the others.



## Topeak Airbooster £19.99

The Airbooster inflator has two ends to screw the canister into; one side is for storing the canister, so there's no worry about releasing CO2 in your jersey pocket, while the 'Engage' side has a useful dust cap. Topeak's push-to-inflate mechanism — which fits both Presta and Schrader valves — was relatively easy to use, inflating our tyres quickly yet

in a controlled manner. Coming with a 16g CO2 cartridge made the Airbooster a perfect size for slipping in a pocket, yet it still inflated our tyres to a decent pressure.

9

**An easy-to-use inflator, with bonus points for its portability**

www.extrauk.co.uk



## Lezyne Control Drive £21.99

The Control Drive's simple press-on system fits both Presta and Schrader valves and was easy to attach. The inflator uses a large dial, which was easy to turn, to give great control over how much air was going in the tyre. A simple graphic indicates which way is 'on' and 'off', so you can be sure no gas will escape as you attach the canister. The control

drive comes with one 16g CO2 canister which easily gives 100psi, that enables you to continue on your ride with an optimum tyre pressure.

9

**The simple, compact design offered great control when inflating**

www.upgradebikes.co.uk



## Genuine Innovations Air Chuck £24.99

Being the most expensive inflator on test the Air Chuck seemed the simplest in design and came with two 16g canisters. Like the rest on test the push on head works with both Presta and Schrader valves, perfect for all bikes.

We found the push-to-inflate mechanism stiff to use, and had little control as we inflated the tyres as the air would just suddenly burst

out. Again the inflator came with 16g cartridges, perfect for getting your tyres back up to pressure and fitting into a saddle pack or pocket.

7

**A small and simple design, but hard to control so may cause a misfire!**

www.zyco.co.uk



## VERDICT

All the gas inflators we tested were a similar size: nice and compact, easily fitting in pockets or saddle packs. We stowed the Genuine Innovations Air Chuck and Lezyne's Control Drive top and canisters separately, as they had no specific ways of storing the canisters without the worry of possibly piercing them.

The Topeak Airbooster featured two sides to screw the canister into, which meant we could store it without worry. Despite this, and being £2 cheaper, we still thought Lezyne's Control Drive was the best on test. It's simple to use design and the dial, which controls the amount of air that went in the tyres, makes it the most effective inflator. It also comes with a sleeve to prevent hands sticking to the canisters, which get very cold as they release air. This is an issue with gas canisters — if you have no sleeve, use gloves. We were less impressed with the GI Air Chuck, and even though it came with two canisters we felt it didn't perform as well as the others.

Practise using your inflator at home before you head out. Most are simple to use, but you don't want to waste a canister, or worst still have no other option to re-inflate your flat.





# ASK CYCLING ACTIVE

Welcome to fitness Q&A, where our coaches and nutritionists are on hand to help you. Each month, we answer your queries, problems and dilemmas so you can enjoy your cycling worry-free. Send your questions to [robert.hicks@timeinc.com](mailto:robert.hicks@timeinc.com)

**CA EXPERT**



This month, Level 3 British Cycling coach Rob Mortlock answers your fitness questions

## Lack of appetite

**I know the importance of recovery, but after a long ride I'm just not hungry. How do I get around this?**

*Paul Stoker, Lincoln*

**A** Not everyone feels the sensation of hunger directly after exercise; it varies between individuals. There's increasing evidence to suggest that those who feel the need to binge after a workout are not necessarily doing themselves a favour, especially if weight control is an issue. In some cases, the extreme feeling of hunger that some people experience can be caused in part by inadequate hydration during exercise.

Provided you are fuelling your rides with adequate food before and during, and ensuring that you are hydrated, there's no reason to worry about not being hungry directly after the ride. The important thing about post-exercise nutrition is that you are replacing lost fluids, along with the

associated electrolytes, and replenishing the energy gained from carbohydrates and glycogen.

To ensure that you are maximising your recovery fuelling, you should be aiming to replace glycogen stored in the muscles as soon as possible. Fruit juice, with its sugars, can help here, if consumed within 20 minutes of finishing your ride. You could also try a recovery shake with protein, which should be easier to take on board if you are not hungry. You should be looking to eat a normal, healthy meal about an hour after your ride.

The intensity at which you finish your rides is also important. You should always aim to include an active cool-down (some people say 'warm-down') in the final 10-20 minutes of your ride in order to bring the body back down to rest gradually. Your body will be more likely to entertain the thought of food if it has been gently brought to rest rather than stopped abruptly.

## Losing my fitness

**I've been doing a lot of training over the winter, but I'm going away on holiday for three weeks, just before the sportive season. Will I lose all my fitness? I'm freaking out.**

*Matt Joyce, Kent*

**A** No need to freak out! First let's look at some aspects of fitness that are affected by a few weeks off.

After two to five weeks, you could expect to see decreases of five to 10 per cent in blood volume and stroke volume, which will affect your cardiac output (the amount of blood the heart pumps per minute). This could be accompanied by an increase in resting heart rate, and a five to 10 per cent higher heart rate during normal activity. Muscle glycogen levels can drop 20-30 per cent while we also see a drop in VO2 max of around five per cent. Inactivity will also contribute to a loss of flexibility and the chances of an increase in body fat.

While this might make it sound as though all your hard-earned fitness will go down the pan, it's not as bad as you may think. Athletes who are already at a peak of training will periodically take a break of one or two weeks, either to adapt to a period of training or as part of a taper for



competition. Although they don't completely cut out activity, the rest has no negative impact on their fitness. In fact, they experience a gain in performance when they return to competition or training.

As a rule of thumb, trained athletes lose aerobic fitness at about the same rate as it took to develop. So, if you spent many months training three to five times a week, it would take a lot more than a three-week holiday to lose all of your fitness.

I would look at the holiday as an



Cool down gradually rather than coming to an abrupt halt



opportunity for training adaptation. A whole week of doing nothing at all would probably help more than you think. Rest for a good portion of the time, then consider some short, high-intensity exercise every few days over the final two weeks to maintain fitness. You don't even need a bike or gym (though great if you can access them) — core exercises in your hotel room, a jog along the beach, some sets of running (or jumping) up steps can help to raise heart rate, maintain flexibility and keep your fitness.

## Can't eat, won't eat

**Q I do much of my training in the morning. The problem is, I find it hard to eat enough to fuel my rides. Do you have any advice?**  
*Emma Conway, Surrey*

**A** Taking on a lot of fuel first thing in the morning isn't everyone's cup of tea (pun intended). However, many people can only fit in training at the beginning of their day, and often it's not practical to get up even earlier

## CA recommends MuleBar Natural Energy Gel

Great-tasting, light on the stomach and easy to open are the essential characteristics for an energy gel. The MuleBar Kicks has all three in abundance. Loaded with a mix of fast and steady-releasing organic carbohydrates formulated to re-energise muscles, each gel also contains Himalayan crystal salts to support hydration as well as real apple juice, which provides antioxidants.

For some, the apple strudel flavour may taste quite sweet, but you can take it with water, making it easier to consume.

[www.mulebar.com](http://www.mulebar.com) £1.60



## “After a few weeks off, you’ll have lost five to 10 per cent in blood volume and output of the heart”

just so you can sit down to a large breakfast. In order to fuel those early morning long rides, and to avoid the dreaded ‘bonk’ (that sudden feeling of overwhelming fatigue) later on, we have to look at what we need to take on, then see how and when it can be fitted into a busy schedule.

A recommended pre-training diet should include carbohydrates with a low to moderate glycaemic index, ensuring a steady stream of glycogen is supplied during the exercise. The low-GI mantra that supports much sports nutrition practice is often interpreted as carb-loading — which is not exactly accurate.

As you don't have the time or the appetite for carb-loading immediately after waking, it might be worth considering a small, low-GI meal an hour before going to bed. Many professional athletes have a bowl of cereal before bed for this reason. With this as a pre-load, you may be able to get away with a small, quick breakfast, e.g. a bagel with peanut butter and banana.

For rides longer than 90 minutes, a general recommendation for fuelling during exercise on the bike is 150kcal for every 45 minutes of exercise; a 30g cereal bar is ideal. The ability to unwrap and digest a bar while riding is an often neglected skill, but it's important. Don't be the rider who finishes the ride exhausted but with a pocket full of uneaten bars!

As always, ensure you are well hydrated before training and keep drinking throughout. It's worth taking an isotonic drink along with you or a second bottle of water with an isotonic additive to boost those electrolytes too.

Photos: Rupert Fowler



# 7 on-the-day tips for your first sportive

It might be your first ever sportive, or just your first of 2015. Either way, CA has a list of helpful tips to help make the day go more smoothly

Words Hannah Reynolds Photos Ray Charles & Helen Keller



## 1 Pack your kitbag early

OK, so this isn't an on-the-day tip, but your day will go much more smoothly if you are properly prepared. Check your bike over several days before the event; make sure the gears are changing smoothly, brakes work and that there are no nicks or damage to your tyres. If there are any problems, you will have time to sort them out.

Pack your kit a day or so before. Consult the long-range weather forecast, and even if the prediction is dry, hot and sunny, be prepared with a lightweight jacket you can wear on the start line and take with you in your pocket.

Make sure all the obvious things go in, especially helmet and shoes. At every event, someone forgets these, and they are hard to purchase or borrow on the day. Pack for after the ride as well — clean, dry socks are blissful on tired feet, and a cosy beanie and your favourite hoodie will help stave off the chill often felt after finishing hard exercise.

## 2 Breakfast like a champion

Eating well in the morning is important. A lot of people worry about how much and what they should eat. If you have eaten well the night before, you don't need to stuff yourself, as this could lead to you feeling full and bloated when you start riding. Eat something you're familiar with and enjoy. Common cyclist's favourites are porridge, bagel and scrambled eggs, and fruit with yoghurt. These are all fine, as they each contain carbohydrate and a little bit of protein.

If you feel nervous and struggle to eat, don't worry; something simple like a fruit smoothie you can sip or an energy drink or banana will be enough to top up your energy stores provided you ate well at dinner the night before.

If you can't face sitting down to a proper breakfast, snack lightly or sip from a bottle of energy drink.

## 3 Before you leave home

After breakfast, do the last-minute tasks such as filling your water

**Above right:** Ascents should be tackled at a pace you feel comfortable with  
**Above:** The start pen, where your plans will come to fruition

bottles and mixing up your recovery drink. Pack all your food for the day including snacks for afterwards. Make sure you have a bottle of plain water and some snack food for the front of the car if you have a long drive to the event.

If you are driving, it saves time to travel in at least the socks, bibshorts and base layer that you intend riding in. Make sure you have a map as well as sat-nav, as some starts are in out-of-the-way places. Also check how far the start line is from the signing-on centre, in case you need to allow a little extra time.

## 4 Have a plan for what to do on arrival

When you arrive, there will be lots to do before you are ready to start the event. Having a strategy saves you rushing around or wasting energy worrying. Go to signing-on and collect your number and goody bag. Don't forget to take your helmet, as many sportives have helmet numbers as well as bar numbers. While signing on, go to the loo (it's worth taking a pack of tissues with you).





Once back at the car, put your number on and use scissors or cable-cutters to get rid of the tail ends of the zip-ties. Only once your bike is ready should you finish getting changed into your kit; this avoids getting chilly. Don't pull up your bibs till you've had the very final loo trip. Stuff your pockets with your food and other spares for the day and make a mental note of what has gone in each pocket, so you aren't fumbling around looking for things. Put on a lightweight jacket to keep warm while waiting at the start line. Lock your car and head for the start.

**5 Pace yourself**  
Most events roll riders out in small groups to prevent congestion. This may mean you are sharing your start pen with super-competitive riders gunning for a gold award. If you know you are going to take it steady, start nearer the back of the pen. If you want a quick getaway, get to the front.

The start can be a bit hair-raising, so ride at your own pace and don't be tempted to jump on to the wheel of an



Fill your bottles prior to the event



A pragmatic approach makes for a successful sportive

overtaking rider unless you are confident you can sustain the effort. Trying too hard too early will result in an overall slower time; you'll burn yourself out. It's better to start out feeling like it's a bit too easy, rather than struggling for breath early on.

Sportives rarely take place on closed roads, so hold your position in the left part of the lane unless you are overtaking. Overtake appropriately, signalling to other riders and car drivers your intentions. When it comes to the climbs, it is even more important to pace yourself, ride steadily and keep calm, focusing on your pedalling and breathing. Remember all the climbing you have done in training. If you do need a break or even to push, there's no shame in it — just bear in mind other riders coming up behind you.

**6 Stick to your eating and drinking strategy**  
Eating and drinking to a planned strategy will see you through an event even if you are slightly underprepared for it. On the other hand, even if you are very well trained, failing to fuel yourself properly will lead to 'blowing up' and struggling to complete the event.

Your on-the-day strategy starts some time before the event. You should

practise with the foods and drinks you intend to use on the day. It's important that you like the flavour and that your stomach can handle it without any adverse effects.

Aim to eat 60-90g carbs per hour. You may need to read the backs of packets and do a little maths. Generally, you'll need one bottle of energy drink, half a bar and a gel or a banana per hour. Plan what you are going to eat and start eating 20 minutes into the ride and every 20 minutes until the end; set an alarm if need be to remind yourself. Include something that you particularly like, to perk you up, should you have a dark moment and need some extra motivation.

## Ride this: Wiltshire Wildcat Saturday, March 14

[www.cyclingweekly.co.uk](http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk)

## 7 Plan for the finish

When you finish, you are likely to have a mix of feelings and emotions. You may be elated, tired, sore, happy and hungry. Though it may be tempting to slump onto the grass, have a recovery drink instead. Doing so will mean you'll feel significantly better later on in the day and the following morning. Even if you have eaten well all the way through the event, you are likely to be in calorie-deficit and also dehydrated.

If you are hanging around to chat to other riders, you will cool down rapidly, which may make your legs stiffen up. If you have sprinted to the line like a maniac, it's worth having a 10-15min cool-down spin, which will help your legs recover, giving your body a chance to deal with the metabolic waste in your muscles. Getting changed into some warm, dry clothes will make you feel more comfortable; it may be only psychological, but you'll feel more comfortable.

Make sure you have eaten well, rehydrated and relaxed for a while after finishing; once the adrenaline and excitement wears off, you can quickly feel exhausted — not ideal for the drive home.

**End**







# “Cycling lost me six stone”

When *Stuart Bettis* saw his weight approaching 20 stone he decided enough was enough. *Rebecca Charlton* discovers how he switched crisps for fruit and the pub for cycling, to shed a whopping six stone

Words Rebecca Charlton Photos Daniel Gould



**S**tuart Bettis looks cold. “Do you want to put an extra layer on?” we ask the 31-year-old, who’s starting to shiver in the chill as we sit on the edge of the Preston Park cycle track in Brighton. It’s a particularly bitter day and it doesn’t look like he has much body fat to keep him warm. We’re flicking through some photos from the years before he discovered cycling and it’s hard to believe we’re looking at the same person. The Stuart here now is almost unrecognisable.

It’s clear something dramatic has happened since his honeymoon in 2009 when he’d crept up to almost 20 stone in weight, a time when he says he’d feel his trousers getting tighter by the day. So what changed?

“I got back from my honeymoon and I looked down at the scales and it said 19.8. I just thought ‘I cannot hit 20 stone, I can’t do it’. That’s when I knew I needed to shift some serious weight,” says Stuart.

Stuart hadn’t piled on the pounds overnight. Although he’d always played sport he admits he didn’t have much knowledge when it came to nutrition.

“What did I eat? A lot of food! I used to play football but I used to be a goalkeeper, so my routine would involve standing around the goal for a few hours and then going out to the pub afterwards. Ten-pint nights, kebabs and waking up in the morning for a dirty great breakfast was the norm. Then I’d still feel rough throughout the day so I’d eat junk all day long. Crisps, chocolate bars, cakes...well the cake still happens now! Crazy amounts of food, I used to eat excessively just for the sake of it. I was hungry all the time and at the time I just thought it was normal.”

Stuart and his wife Amy fell into the trap that so many of us do





and that's to lose a grip on portion size as well as added extras.

"We used to think we were having healthy meals because we'd always cook something from fresh rather than microwave meals, but then we used to have a lot of take-outs as well.

"We could have takeaway two or three times a week," Stuart continues.

### Cycling discovery

Deciding he was getting bigger and bigger Stuart knew it was time to take action and so he started cycling to work, at this point weighing almost 20 stone. "I took my crappy old mountain bike and took on a six-mile commute a couple of times a week which would absolutely kill me!" he says.

School friend Paul Barnard had ridden and raced since he was a child and suggested that Stuart may find things a bit easier, and slightly quicker, if he got himself a road bike. This was the point of no return and the cycling bug really bit.

After Stuart was convinced to buy a drop handlebar bike, Paul invited him along to watch the racing that took place on the Preston Park, in Brighton, cycle track on a Wednesday night in 2009 — fast bunch action on fixed-gear bikes, meaning no brakes. But watching wasn't enough and within a couple of months Stuart wanted in. His weight was down to 17 stone, 8 pounds by this point, but he knew he had further to go.

"All the guys seemed really friendly, there was a good group of people who would keep saying to me 'come down and race, come down and race!'

"I got made redundant in December 2009 so I used some of that money to get a track bike and hired a coach. I thought if I got a coach it would help me to lose more weight and I was also so nervous about coming to race. I'd never done anything like that before and I didn't want to be the one left at the back all the time."

It turned out despite his fears Stuart was a natural, and by the time he lined up for his first real race in April 2010 he'd slimmed down to 15 stone, 10 pounds, a huge transformation already.

"Actually the first race wasn't too bad, and my first night I picked up some decent results. Within the first three weeks I'd already been promoted to the A league which I did not expect to happen! I was expecting to come in last. And it continued from there, I carried on getting decent results," says Stuart.

He may have quickly joined the cream of the crop but having been a complete non-cyclist he admits his first foray into bunch riding wasn't without a fair amount of nerves.

## Vital stats:

**Before: 19st 8lb**

**After: 13st 7lb**

**Height: 6ft 3in**

**Age: 31**

**Job: Facilities manager**

**Lives: Worthing, West Sussex**



Stuart, at his heaviest, weighed 19 stone



After his honeymoon Stuart decided he needed to change

"The first time on the track was even scarier because I knew I couldn't brake! That terrified the life out of me," laughs Stuart. "But now I'd say I am almost more comfortable riding in a bunch on the track than the road, because I think the brakes actually cause more of a problem. As for my first time in the bunch at a circuit race, well I didn't last long anyway!"

Things escalated from there and Stuart was soon on a racing team, something he never dreamt of in the early days of cycling. "I first started with Team Terminator and had some sponsorship which as a first year rider I never ever expected!"

But the birth of his first daughter meant that the riding slowed down as life became more hectic. He crept back up to 16 stone, 8 pounds and knew he had to get things back under control. His new job was based in Falmer, which

**"I think the 18-mile cycle commute to work definitely helps. I just feel much, much better in myself"**

**Above: Stuart started racing on the track at Preston Park, and now commutes to work by bike, too**

meant a longer commute, in fact it was 18 miles each way. He started riding this every day, which eventually saw him hit 13 stone, 4 pounds, a weight he's maintained ever since.

### New way of life

After three seasons of riding and racing, and getting down to his lowest weight ever, Stuart emailed South Downs Bikes, a local race club, and asked to join: "The following season they asked me to join the race team, which was amazing," he says.

Many of us will be reading this, thinking 'I'm no racer' or 'I cycle





## The truth about carbs

There's no doubting that carbohydrates are very important for cyclists. Once we eat them, they are quickly converted to glucose, providing a significant source of energy for our body to burn. When we ride, we need carbohydrates. No ifs, no buts.

However, a lot of cyclists don't know how to use them effectively, which can lead to weight gain and this is where the confusion lies, writes *Robert Hicks*.

There are many elements involved in fuelling: your fitness, your pre-fuelling state, and the length and intensity of your ride all determine how much food you need to take on. Did you know that for any ride under 90 minutes, providing you start in an adequately fuelled state, carbohydrate drinks aren't necessary? The same process can be applied to your recovery, too.

What you must remember is that the body can only store so much glycogen (the storage form of glucose). It's about 2,000 calories, and if you start to consume more, the body has no other option but to store it as fat. And it doesn't take a genius to work out that if you stuff your face full of white bread and pasta before a slow, leisurely two-hour ride, and drink bottle after bottle of sports drink, with gels and bars as you go, and then finish with a recovery drink full of protein and carbohydrates, you will put on weight.

Eat well before your ride — not to excess. Understand the role carbohydrates have on your body, note how long your ride will be and how hard you will be riding, and adjust your fuelling accordingly.

regularly and still need to shift some weight'. Stuart admits he had to make a huge change to his diet in order to see his weight go down, and to fuel his riding and recovery too. His whole lifestyle changed beyond recognition.

"I work in facilities management and now I'm at the University of Sussex as a logistics manager there. I look after the portering, post, mail room, recycling over the campus, there's 60-odd buildings over there."

Not only does he have a busy working day, but Stuart is now doing that 18-mile commute every weekday. We're starting to suspect that he may be super-human and us mere mortals may need a rest day if this was our daily ride, but nevertheless, whatever length your commute, it's a great way to integrate cycling into your day.

"Now I feel I've got to exercise every day and I eat porridge or scrambled

eggs when I get to work. If I'm snacking I'm having apples or bananas, then lunches tend to be a lot of chicken, rice, salad or pasta, maybe a protein shake and then I'll have a healthy dinner. Before it would have been sugary cereal, toast, chocolate bars, crisps, cakes, sandwiches, and my portion sizes would have been massive, and four days out of seven a takeaway. So it's a massive change.

"I don't know how I used to function with the way I used to eat. Now if I have a bad weekend and I'm out on the beers, I just feel rubbish, I can't get myself up or motivated," Stuart says. "I think the commute to work definitely helps, because that wakes you up to start with and eases you into the day. I just feel much, much better in myself."

It's not only Stuart that has



Stuart ditched the lager six-pack on his way to losing six stone



benefitted but his whole family, as his wife Amy and his two children are all eating well now, too.

"My wife always used to eat what I ate, she was having similar size portions. Me eating ridiculously was making her eat ridiculously as well. The pair of us have changed together," he says.

"The kids weren't around when I was bigger, but I think it's good now we are all eating healthily there's not that option of chips and rubbish!"

Stuart makes it sound easy, in fact he says eating well doesn't need to be difficult and it's all in the planning.

"I always plan my meals now, as sad as it may sound, I know what I'm having every night of the week so I can get the meat out of the freezer, or prepare the vegetables. Once the kids have gone to bed I'll start preparing the meal for the following night."

There's no magic wand when it comes to weight loss, but Stuart often switched carbohydrate-heavy meals for more protein-based foods, which he found effective.

"I think there's this massive focus on carbs, people tell you, 'eat pasta, eat rice' but I've done that in moderation so I don't crash after having loads and loads of carbs every single night (see boxout). I have a lot of protein and that really pulled my weight down, and I noticed when I put any weight on again I'd reduce the carbs again and for me that worked.

"I get the odd day where I feel really hungry; I might not bring enough for lunch and I start craving something in the afternoon, but I always make sure I have apples and bananas in my drawer at work so I can always grab something.

"Now when I'm snacking it's different. In the past it would have been crisps but now I'm looking for fruit or sushi, because now I've got to think about getting home as well, it's got to be something that will fuel me to get back."

## Cycling goals

It's clear that Stuart had a bit of a hidden talent when it came to cycling, so what's next for the speedy, yet modest rider?

"I suppose my first goal was to race



## Track cycling

Preston Park in Brighton, is where Stuart fell in love with cycling and a track like this, or one of the many banked velodromes or closed circuits around the country, are a great way to get started in cycling.

Indoor wooden velodromes are becoming increasingly popular and with new venues in London and Glasgow more people are getting the chance to give it a go.

Whether you decide to go for the thrill-seeker-steep boards or outside to one of the open-air venues like Preston Park or Herne Hill in South London, closed tracks offer a safe

environment away from traffic where you can start nice and slowly, and gain your confidence whether riding by yourself or in a group.

There are lots of different ability level sessions on offer so check out the venue's website to make sure you're signing up for the right thing! A taster session is a good place to start.

### A few useful links:

[www.britishcycling.org.uk](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk)  
[www.hernehillvelodrome.com](http://www.hernehillvelodrome.com)  
[www.nationalcyclingcentre.com](http://www.nationalcyclingcentre.com)  
[www.visitleevalley.org.uk](http://www.visitleevalley.org.uk)  
[www.scrf.co.uk](http://www.scrf.co.uk)

**Above:** Stuart found he had a natural talent for track racing  
**Above right:** Since conquering the track, Stuart's hit the road

and to finish a season without being the laughing boy. To move up to the A league, which would have perhaps been the next year's goal, was massive."

Having already achieved that, Stuart turned his attention to the road.

"I did my first race at Hillingdon race circuit and was the laughing boy, I got lapped four or five times and I just thought 'what am I doing?' I then thought, 'I'm going to finish this race'.

"Once I'd been promoted on the track I started winning or getting podiums on the championship nights. Then last year I went out with the



Surrey League to Ireland and rode the Ras, an eight-day stage race in Ireland, which was a fantastic experience, riding in the bunch there with 200 riders was absolutely terrifying. But looking at where I've come from, to riding the Ras was a massive transition."

Stuart may be enthused about the racing side of things but it's not all about going fast, even for him. "Last year we did an amazing ride up to Box Hill in Surrey, it was just a great day, the weather was great and you're just riding your bike through the countryside thinking 'yep this is amazing', I love it."

Motivation can start to wane, even for the most disciplined, so how does Stuart stay on the straight and narrow?

"I think when the season ends that's when I struggle a bit, September, October time when I stop racing, that couple of months after is a bit like 'right let's hit the beer, get a takeaway and eat junk' so I do have to rein it in."

"I have gone through that phase at the end of last year and now I'm back on it. The club promote a time trial in February so that's always my first goal for the season and I'm always conscious I want a PB. In the approach to Christmas I try to slim down as much as possible because I'm also conscious that the festive period is going to be hard."

### Looking back on the journey

Stuart feels more energised than ever and can't believe he used to get through the day with his old lifestyle, but there's an emotional side, too. We ask how he

### "I used to come to Preston Park and get compliments which would spur me on"

feels as he looks back at older photographs of himself.

"The thing that stands out to me the most is how big my face is in these photos and it just reminds me of the honeymoon cruise and my clothes just feeling tighter and tighter as the two weeks went on."

"I've still got a couple of those T-shirts kicking around and they're like tents on me now."

"I think people noticing really helps. The people I was riding with were saying 'you're looking lean, you're looking good', people at work were noticing it. With family they don't tend to notice it so much because you're with them so often. But certainly I used to come to Preston Park each week and I'd get regular compliments which would really spur me on."

At the time of going to press the future of the racing at Preston Park looks uncertain due to necessary safety works, but the park remains open to the public. We hope to see Stuart back on track soon and wish him every luck with what we are sure will be another successful season for him.

**End**



Stuart: a comparison between then and now



# 7 OF THE BEST

# Energy bars

**When it comes to topping up blood sugar and revitalising flagging muscles there's nothing better than a cycling-specific energy bar. Here's seven varieties of sweet sustenance reviewed**

Words Robert Hicks

**E**nergy bars are one of the quickest, easiest and most effective ways of getting much-needed fuel into your body. For any bike ride over 90 minutes, you're going to need a steady intake of carbohydrates to produce the energy needed to keep turning the pedals.

When it runs short on carbs, the body starts to run on empty and will inevitably break down. Many cyclists refer to this as 'the bonk'. To put it simply, bonking is the moment when there is not enough fuel in your system to support the energy that your body requires. When it hits, there's not much else you can do, other than

slow down to a snail's pace and start getting some food into your body.

Energy bars are a great source of carbohydrates. A good energy bar contains 25-35g of carbohydrates, and some also contain protein, electrolytes and fibre. They vary in taste and texture so experiment with a few brands.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### Over 90 minutes

After an hour and a half, the body needs carbohydrates to fuel the working muscles. A failure to do so will lead to 'the bonk'.

### Variety

Some bars are 'all-natural' and contain no artificial colours or preservatives, whereas others rely more heavily on synthetic ingredients. A lot of bars are now gluten-free, though many still use oats, which can contain traces of gluten. There are many to choose

from, so it's important to find the right bar for you.

### Nibble

Eat half at a time (every hour) and combine it with gels and fluids to ensure you are consuming at least 60g of carbs per hour.



## SiS Go £1.30

The first thing that springs to mind is size. At 65g, the Go bar is easily the biggest on test, though SiS does produce a smaller, bite-size energy bar.

Each Go bar contains 43g of carbohydrates, so eating just half gets 20g of carbohydrates into your body — perfect on long rides to complement your energy gels and drinks.

Some cyclists say this bar is too sweet, but we at *Cycling*

*Active* disagree. Yes, it may be sweet, but it isn't sickly and is, in fact, very easy to eat. Its chewy texture makes a welcome change from some of the other, drier, softer bars on test.

**They're big, bold and do the job**

7

www.scienceinsport.com



## Honey Stinger £1.66

You may not be too familiar with Honey Stinger, but its bars are worthy of attention. Each 50g bar contains 26g of carbohydrates and 5g of protein, as well as vitamins, minerals and calcium. Each bar is over 30 per cent honey, which not only adds to the taste but also helps provide a slower release of energy — honey is 55 on the glycaemic index, versus 100 for glucose — to the working muscles, rather than one, sudden hit.

What really makes this bar stand out from the rest is its taste. Its chocolate-coated bottom gives it a really sweet taste, which isn't too overbearing; it's easy to eat, gives you a boost and fills your stomach.

**Something a little different but doesn't look out of place**

8

www.honeystinger.com



## Beet It Sport £1.33

Each bar contains 0.4g of dietary nitrate and 35g of carbohydrates. We all know why the body needs carbohydrates but you may not be familiar with the role nitrate plays. Put simply, nitrate is converted into nitric oxide in the body, which helps dilate red blood vessels and improve blood flow — getting more oxygen to the muscles.

OK, so it doesn't look very appetising, but the taste is not bad. Could we eat several over the course of a ride? We're not quite so sure.

**It may not look very appetising, but looks can be deceiving**

7

www.beet-it.com



## Torq Bar £1.55

This really is a great-tasting bar: moist, chewy and full of fruity goodness. It may be a tad too sickly for some but it's easy to digest and doesn't weigh too heavily on the stomach. Each bar contains 32g of carbohydrates, so packs a punch and will certainly help you to keep your muscles properly fuelled. It's also very

low in fat and contains fibre, which helps the body feel fuller for longer.

**Fills you up and re-energises but is a tad sickly**

8

www.torqfitness.co.uk







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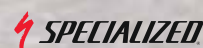
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## PowerBar Energize Wafer £1.19

This looks as appetising as a non-sports snack, and it tastes great too. The Energize Wafer has a 'dual-source energy blend' featuring a two-to-one ratio mix of glucose and fructose. Each wafer contains 27.2g of carbohydrates, which, according to its maker, provides more energy to the muscles. Even so, it's the taste, texture and style that separate

the Energize Wafer from the rest. It couldn't feel anything less like a traditional energy bar; this is a real treat for those long rides.

9

**A cracking energy wafer that ticks all the boxes**

www.powerbar.com



## Wiggle Energy Bar £17.99 for box of 20

This bar may look small but it's very thick, which may be a little off-putting. This is a bar you'll really need to get your teeth into. However, it does taste good — like a fruity cereal bar — and contains 44g of carbohydrates. Each bar contains real fruit pieces and rolled oats. It's low in fat and salt and is suitable for vegetarians. It's not too

heavy on the stomach, despite its density, and is good enough to eat as an off-the-bike snack.

7

**A brilliant tasting bar that sits well on the stomach**

www.wiggle.co.uk



## CNP Energy Bar £1.40

This energy bar is very similar to Wiggle's in terms of texture, but comes out on top in the taste race. Full of natural ingredients and pieces of dried fruit, it really gets the taste buds tingling. Some energy bars can be quite dry and difficult to consume.

Fortunately, this energy bar — which contains 39g of carbohydrates — is moist and very easy to eat.

8

**Light, easy and tasty — a great energy bar**

www.cnpprofessional.co.uk



## VERDICT

If we're being honest, all the bars featured here are very good products. Making an energy bar is relatively simple and there'd be no excuse for making a disgusting one.

The PowerBar Energize Wafer is this month's winner. It looks different from all the others on test; its texture and taste are unique. It's not too dry, nor is it gooey, sickly or sweet. PowerBar has found the perfect balance. It also contains the optimum blend of carbohydrates for fuelling muscles during long bouts of moderate to intense exercise on the bike.





**T**his summer has the potential to be your best ever and the great thing about it is that it's totally down to you. No one else can make it happen. It's quite a scary thought, the prospect of creating such huge expectations knowing that no one else in charge of the outcome apart from you, but it can also be invigorating; you're the one in control.

But how does one go about achieving such highs, such targets and such goals? Well, there are a few things you can try. They aren't huge changes; a lot of cyclists feel they must make dramatic differences to training, their diet and principles in order to improve. But that needn't be the case. Here are a few things you can try, which when on their own, may not seem like much, but together could be the difference between another season of mediocrity and a season of success.

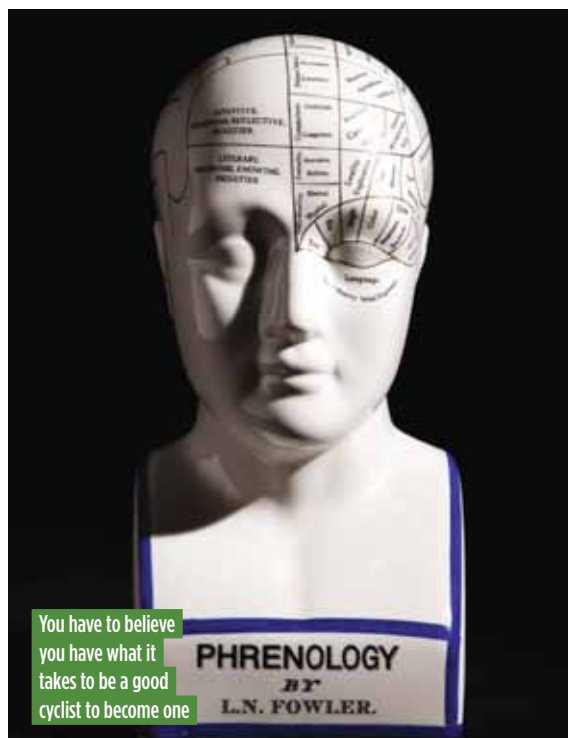
# 6 ways to upgrade your fitness

**Want 2015 to be your best season yet? Follow our six fitness tips and it could turn out just that way**

**Words** Robert Hicks **Photos** Jesse Wild, Daniel Gould, Andy Jones







**1 Think like a winner**  
Confidence is the hallmark of a winner. It's not arrogance, it's self-assurance in your ability. The moment you start thinking like a winner is the moment you start acting like one. Self-confidence is the belief that you can successfully perform a desired behaviour. If you don't believe you have what it takes to become a great cyclist, you may as well give up.

**Self-confidence in four principles:**

- **Success breeds success:** success that has been achieved will lead to positive expectation of further success, which will enhance self-belief.
- **Praise:** having others show confidence in your ability will have a positive effect on your own confidence.
- **How others do it:** how do other cyclists become so successful? Find out how they do it and copy them.
- **Change your way of thinking:** perceiving physiological symptoms such as sweaty palms, butterflies and increased heart rate in a positive way rather than negatively, can increase overall confidence.

**2 Start a training diary**  
Recent studies have shown that those who track and record their progress, reflecting on the successes and failures and being held accountable by others, can help increase the chances of success. One study in particular, which was presented in the Annual Conference of the British Society's Division, asked students to complete questionnaires about their fitness goals, as well as keep a diary about their reflections on the processes that would help them reach their goals. Results showed that those who kept records successfully

reached their targets.

While the study looked primarily at fitness, this principle can be applied to cycling. When training or even competing, from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep, write down everything: how much sleep you had, how you felt in the morning, what you had for breakfast, how you felt when out riding, what your riding consisted of, how you felt mentally, what you had for dinner, what time you went to bed. Was that day a good day? Ask yourself what made it a good day. When you go training again, follow the same process. Soon, you should be able

to start recognising a pattern or similarities between the good days. Mimic what you did. Perhaps it was a certain breakfast at a specific part of the day that keeps emerging among your good days. Or a type of session that brings out the best in you. Whatever it is, use it again.

Eventually you will build up a picture of your 'perfect training day.' The same principle can be applied to your bad days. What did you do? What didn't you do? Write it all down. It won't be long before you are spotting the changes between the good and the bad days.





### 3 Invest in technology

Information is vital to progression. The more we understand about ourselves — how we perform in certain situations, how the body reacts to nutrition, environment and competition, its response to injuries and subsequent treatment — the more we can gain an understanding of our bodies and how to maximise its true potential. Some cyclists are afraid of technology; 'we didn't have all that technology 10 years ago, and we managed,' is a creed many cyclists live by. And yes, they may have got by all right, but imagine how much better they could've been if they had so much more information available?

Team Sky are such huge advocates of technology, working to numbers and training to certain zones and figures, that some professional cyclists have even gone on record to say that they are ruining the sport. Regardless of whether they are or not, there's no denying that their method has made them the dominant team in world cycling. A lot of cyclists are scared of technology because they don't want to know the truth. Technology doesn't lie nor does it tip-toe around facts. It won't let you make excuses. It doesn't care that you didn't feel well.

Cyclists are precious about their performance and the capabilities of their bodies. But the truth hurts, and if you want to get better, then you need to face these facts. Technology can also help with training. Working on feel is all well and good, but working to specific heart-rate zones and power outputs is far more accurate. You can also set pre-event routines and plans to progressively build your training up to the big day. Of course, this all comes at a price, and that is... the retail price.

Technology isn't cheap; power meters, heart rate monitors and cadence sensors cost a fair bit of money. As do lab performance analysis sessions, sweat checks and bike fit sessions. Is it worth the money? Well, if you want to better yourself, then yes it is. But how much do you want to succeed?

## Technology to try

**Polar FT1 heart-rate monitor**  
£46.50 [www.polar.com](http://www.polar.com)

Not the most developed product among the Polar collection, but great for those starting out with heart-rate monitor technology. It's clear to read and easy to follow.

**Garmin Edge 810** £379.99  
[www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)

Built-in mapping, heart-rate readings, power and speed outputs, as well as the ability to download your training and upload it to the computer to view your performance. You can also set routes to ride and compare your performance across multiple sessions.



Get your diet right and you will see a change in your performance on the bike

### 4 Eat like a champion!

A surefire way to improve your performance is through your diet. And what's great about it is that the improvements are almost instant. Now that doesn't mean going out and buying supplements. If your general diet is poor, taking supplements won't make any difference, apart from creating a huge dent in your wallet. Getting the basics right doesn't mean you have to go out and buy organic foods and bottles of mineral water either. It's about doing the simple things right first.

#### ■ Starch, the base of every meal:

One third of your food should be made up of starchy foods such as potatoes, pasta, rice and bread. Wholegrain foods are a healthier option as they contain fibre, which help the body feel fuller for longer — these will provide the energy to get you through the day and help fuel your ride.

■ **Fruit and vegetables:** It is recommended that you eat at least five items of fruit and vegetables a day; this should make up the second third of each meal. This is where you will get the majority of your vitamins, minerals

and salts, as well as antioxidants. These help fight off disease and help keep the body functioning optimally, something that is very important when you are exercising, as a bout of illness could set your training back.

#### ■ The final third is split into three sections:

protein milk and dairy and fats. Protein is essential for muscle growth — vital after exercise — and helps keep the body strong. Fish, meat and poultry are great sources of protein, while beans, eggs and lentils provide adequate protein for non-meat eaters. Milk and dairy products such as cheese and yoghurt also provide protein, and are a good source of calcium and vitamins. Fats form a part of a healthy diet; mono-unsaturated and polyunsaturated fats can lower cholesterol. Examples of foods containing these fats are olive oil, nuts and avocados. However, avoid eating too much saturated fat — found in cream and butter among others — there are question marks over its healthfulness.

■ **Fluids:** The body needs fluid to function. All non-alcoholic drinks count with water and milk deemed the healthiest. You should be drinking 1.2 litres of fluid every day.





**5 Embrace science** Don't be scared of it. Sports science is forever growing, as is the body of research and amount of studies being published. All these studies are released for general viewing; you can find these online. Why not give them a read? It's amazing how people will buy supplements based on a TV advert rather than clicking on the papers and seeing for themselves how efficient these products actually are.

And it's not just supplements that are printed in these papers. How certain training sessions can make big physiological changes; the

## "Sports science is growing, as is the body of research and amount of studies being published, all of which are released for general viewing"

effectiveness of equipment such as skinsuits on performance; when best to train to maximise potential, are all subjects that are being observed, recorded and analysed in order to push performance to its limits. Keep a step ahead. Don't wait to be told what to do, go and find the answers. It's great fun too, sifting through research in an area that interests you and finding patterns

and key information that you can then extrapolate and use practically.

However, be careful as some research can be misleading. The majority of all research — providing you are reading the actual paper — will be quite reliable and state the results of the study. It is more often than not the newspapers that twist the research papers, to change the results in order to suit a story. However, in some cases, studies results may be influenced or aren't as valid as they seem. See who is funding the research. If a study states that milk can increase cycling performance by 50 per cent, it may be because a dairy company is funding the study.

In some cases, studies may uncover a breakthrough find, but if the sample of subjects is so small, it's best to wait until further research on a larger samples emerges. When reviewing research, it's worth remembering not to take it as gospel immediately.

Form your own opinions, dig deeper into that area — through more research papers and expert opinions — and then think how it could help your performance.

### Most informative journals:

- International Journal of Performance Analysis in Sport
- International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching
- International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance



Get stuck into the science of sport and use the research to help your cycling



Having a coach can help you identify areas of weakness quickly

**6 Get a coach** A coach has many roles; they are a tactician, an expert, a psychologist, a life coach, a motivator and a friend. What is it that you are lacking in your cycling make-up? Do you struggle to self-motivate on a cold, blustery morning? Do you lack the tactical edge in races and find yourself in poor positions within the pack? Do you lack confidence and the self-belief in your own ability? Do you struggle to plan your week, balancing work, family and cycling into your days? These are just some of the issues that coaches can help with. They aren't just there to make you ride quicker.

Sometimes when looking at yourself, it can be hard to see where things are going wrong. After all, why would you question what you have been doing for years? However, another set of eyes from the outside looking in can identify potential issues far quicker and spot problems that you may never even think of. It can be very easy to get defensive when someone is spotting areas of 'weakness'. But remember, a coach is unbiased, and is there to help you. That's what they are being paid to do.

However, investing in a coach can cause problems. Occasionally personalities will clash; it can sometimes be hard to find a coach you get on with. Don't get too disheartened if you and your coach don't click. That doesn't mean that coaches are a waste of time. It just means that you haven't found the right one for you yet.

### Tips to find a coach

- While qualifications alone won't make a good coach, they are important. All coaches must be qualified, but it's more than just knowledge. A qualified coach says that they not only possess the skills needed, but are committed to the cause (through investing their own time and money) to make you a better rider.
- A good coach should have great people skills, be easily approachable, flexible, adaptable to your needs, enthusiastic and committed. You are investing in them as much as you are investing in their knowledge.
- All coaches are listed on the British Cycling coaching directory, where you will be able to find a coach based on their location and type (discipline in which they are qualified).



# READ IT RIDE IT



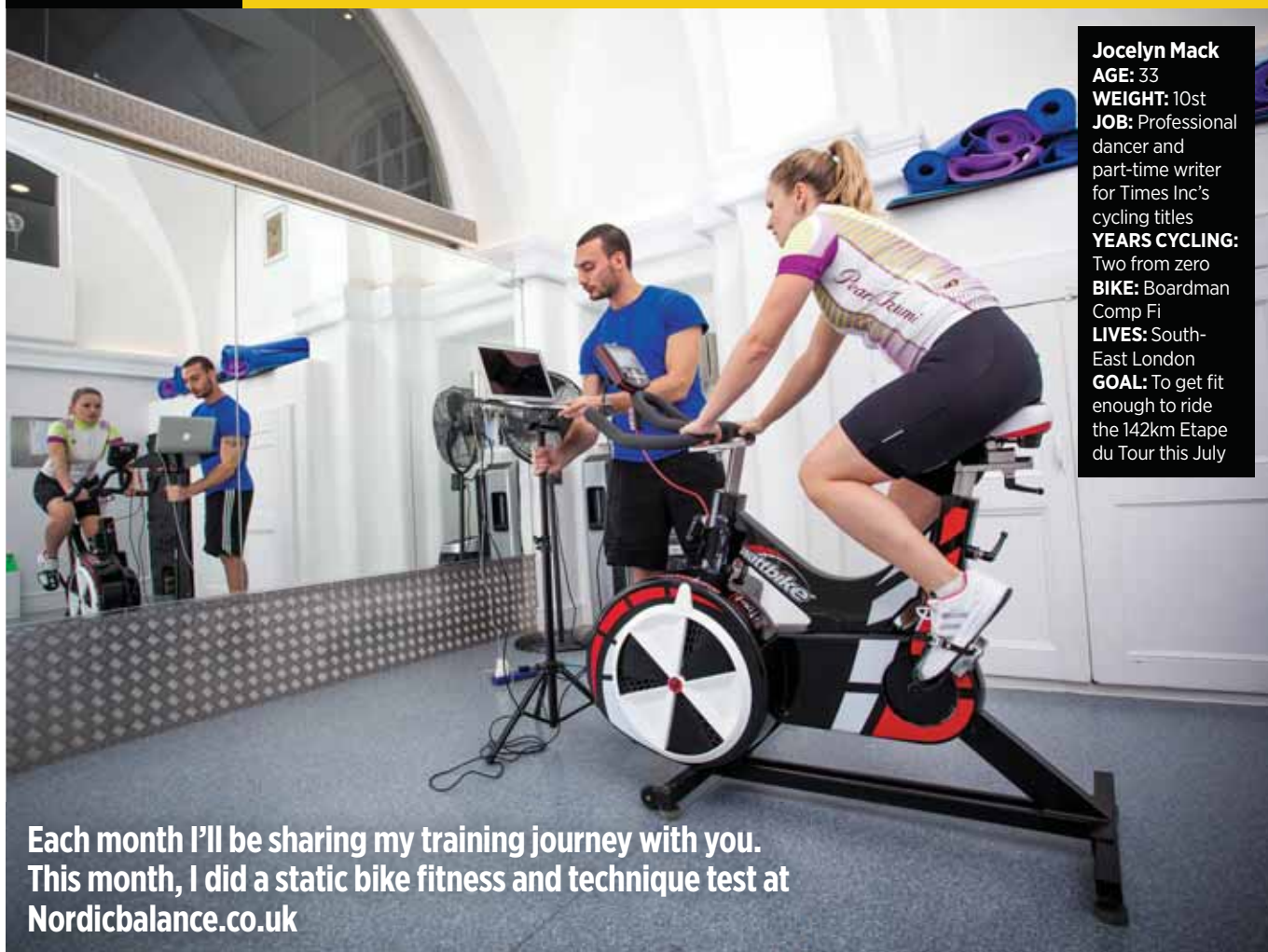
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## CA STAFFER CHALLENGE

# TRAINING TRIBULATIONS



**Jocelyn Mack**  
**AGE:** 33  
**WEIGHT:** 10st  
**JOB:** Professional dancer and part-time writer for Times Inc's cycling titles  
**YEARS CYCLING:** Two from zero  
**BIKE:** Boardman Comp Fi  
**LIVES:** South-East London  
**GOAL:** To get fit enough to ride the 142km Etape du Tour this July

Each month I'll be sharing my training journey with you. This month, I did a static bike fitness and technique test at [Nordicbalance.co.uk](http://Nordicbalance.co.uk)

In a basement studio below the bustling streets of London, I was about to push myself to my sweaty, tear-soaked limit for the sake of science and fitness.

I had gone along to do a Nordic Fit Assessment to help me to understand a few principles that, up to now, I had ignored: lactate threshold, VO2 max and training zones. In the past, I've just headed out and ridden my bike without any specific focus — putting the miles in and hoping for the best.

When I met personal trainer Alessandro Alviani, who was to put me through my paces, he assured me it would assist my training: "Knowing the different capacities is important to understand what you excel at and what you need to work on, so you can correctly address the workout and train more efficiently and appropriately," he said.

Though I wasn't sure I was ready for what was in store, I figured: no pain, no gain.

The tests were all done on a Wattbike while wearing a heart-rate monitor. The theory was to go flat-out for a set of intervals, starting at five seconds and working to 20 minutes. The shorter sets were where I excelled; I struggled to maintain the effort over 20 minutes.

"You're a sprinter," Alviani told me. "More talented muscularly than in cardiovascular [efficiency]. You need to push your lactate

threshold up and improve your sustainable power." In other words, I have no endurance. Not ideal for an 88-mile event.

Alviani tells me that people used to base their training around maximum heart rate, but that now lactate threshold matters most: "Lactate-clearance is the rate at which your body is able to clear the acidic by-products of exercise. You know, that burning sensation that makes you want to stop," he explained.

"The level at which these by-products accumulate more quickly than they are cleared is your lactate threshold."

### Power to the pedal

Currently, my lactate threshold is low, and on a route that should take me about seven hours, with each climb between one and 1.5 hours, I need to push that marker up. The Etape is not a route for a sprinter.

Alviani gave me a detailed training plan to follow on a Wattbike — the perfect excuse to keep the training indoors while it's still winter. The programme details how long I should spend in each zone of training. I'm sure you're familiar with the six main zones. My plan has been based around zones three, four and five, where the body starts to improve sustainable power and push up its lactate threshold.

I have a few sessions tucked under my belt

now and seem to have permanently aching quads. I'm taking that as a good sign!

The assessment also threw up my poor pedalling technique. "Correct pedalling technique is important," Alviani said. "You need to engage each muscle correctly and at the right time and phase. This increases power, aids recovery and avoids incorrect overuse of muscles."

I tend to stamp on the pedals, using the strength of my quads. No wonder my legs have been fatiguing quickly. "You're losing too much momentum," says Alviani. "You need to engage the hamstrings and smooth the transition from leg to leg. At the bottom of the pedal stroke, think about pulling your foot up, pulling through between six and eight o'clock."

I've found using a Wattbike to gauge this is ideal, as you can see the shape you're making as you pedal. Even in a couple of weeks I've seen it improve. By focusing on pulling through at the bottom of the stroke, I've moved away from the beginner's figure-of-eight shape to the wider peanut shape. I now need to aim for a sausage shape, then my pedal power will be balanced between each leg, and I'll be maintaining a good momentum. The trick is to become my own teacher. This information has helped to raise my awareness, and I need to take that on to the road with me.



Camaraderie and socialising  
are key Sky Ride components



# Let's ride further

A yearning for more of a challenge from frequent Sky Ride participants has led to the Let's Ride Further programme. It took just minutes for *Cycling Active* to be impressed

Words and photos Chrissy Marshall-Bell

**I**f you require substance to the statistics that Sky Ride programmes are fuelling the love of cycling for more people then be regaled by this tale.

"I know someone who at the beginning of the year was doing 10-mile loops, advanced to the Sky Ride Local steady rides and then the challenging rides. He then contacted me to say he'd gone out and done a 60-mile sportive, less than six months after starting out on an easygoing ride," Andy Beckett, a Sky Ride Local leader says.

The programme, led by British Cycling with local authority partners Sport England and Sky, includes the Sky Ride Local guided rides that have attracted 84,000 riders in the five years since the programme was set up.

The initiative has been such a success that this autumn a host of longer challenging rides, aptly named Let's Ride Further, was introduced as a pilot scheme in nine locations that Sky Ride have a strong presence in.

Let's Ride Further is aimed at cyclists aged 16 and over who are looking for a challenge and are able to pedal distances of 40 miles on a road bike. Of the 350 people who took part in the 31 rides across nine locations this autumn, many had progressed their way through the three stages of Sky Ride Local: easygoing (less than 10 miles), steady (10-20 miles) and challenging (20-40 miles).

*Cycling Active* rode the Bournemouth edition of Ride Further, the 42-mile Looping the New Forest route. A safe, sensibly-paced, scenic and sociable ride was established within minutes of departing Hengistbury Head and travelling through Christchurch to reach the National Park where we would encounter ponies and pigs and ride on the area's most stunning roads such as the tree-lined Rhinefield Ornamental Drive.

The four leaders provided safety in numbers, two at the back and two at the front with one standing at junctions to ensure a safe crossing.

## No limits at Sky

The lively laughing bunch ranged in age from teenagers to pensioners — one had travelled 60 miles "to see the New Forest and because these are great rides" — and were directed by Mark Traves.

Mark was so entranced by the spirit and "all-inclusive nature of these events" that when he broke his ankle a few years ago, "I did a Sky Ride Local to get me into cycling, thought I quite liked this so did my training to be a leader."

Mark's the epitome of the Sky Ride purpose: "These rides aren't about what time you get. It's getting people realising, like people here today who were apprehensive about the ride because they haven't done this distance before, that they can go beyond what they thought they can."

"You don't have to be the fastest; the speed doesn't matter. It's doing it that's the important thing."

"You see the dynamics in a group: you will have slower riders who form their own group



Find a pace suited to your level of riding

## Autumn 2014 locations

Let's Ride Further was piloted in nine locations: Bournemouth, Southampton, Sheffield, two in London, two in Birmingham, two in Manchester.

■ Let's Ride Further are longer versions of Sky Ride Local

■ FREE to enter a Sky Ride

■ 65 local councils have signed up to Sky Ride

and riders who want to stretch their legs and go faster. Everyone's made to feel comfortable at whatever speed they wish to ride."

### Summer starts

It is only with 15 miles left after a cafe stop at the Old Farmhouse Tearooms in Burley that two groups do form; nonetheless, two leaders stay with the two separate clusters of riders until the end.

Another successful Sky Ride Local led, another dose of satisfaction for Andy: "It gets me out for a ride and at the same time helps others, builds their confidence and ability.

"And it's great to see them improve throughout the year and to see their smiles at the end of the ride, their pleasure in achieving."

"You hear people talking about doing better at a hill that they used to struggle on. That's the progression of Sky Rides," Mark enthuses.

Jo-Anne Downing, British Cycling recreation manager in the south, described a common answer to Let's Ride Further feedback: "We get a lot of positive feedback on all of our rides, people love to ride. Let's Ride Further has been really successful and the only problem we have had so far is not rolling the rides out in more locations, such is the popularity; that's a nice problem to have.

"The response we get from participants is that they are disappointed that the ride series has ended. They want more."

Good job, then, that there are plans to roll them out across more locations and throughout the summer months in 2015.

Let's Ride Further is set to become a permanent feature under the Sky Ride Local portfolio of rides. In 2015, they are to be rolled out across more areas of the country, commencing in the summer, as opposed to the autumn during this year's pilot scheme. Keep visiting [www.goskyride.com/SkyRide-Local](http://www.goskyride.com/SkyRide-Local) for announcements.

**End**



Puncture repair, AKA an impromptu rest stop

## I rode it...

### Barry O'Callaghan

"The New Forest ride was a nice flat ride and I'd do another one if it comes at a time that I can do it.

"Let's Ride Further rides will be excellent everywhere:

Dartmoor, the Lake District, anywhere.

"I enjoy Sky Rides because the lads who run them are sound and it's a sociable day out. My little grandson has done a slow Sky Ride and he enjoyed it too. They really are great for family and social riding."



### Glen Brooks

"I've only been riding for the past year to lose weight and to gain fitness and it's worked as I've lost three stone in six months.

"I signed up to this ride for an excuse to ride my bike. It's a great social event and a cup of tea halfway is always a bonus.

"Everyone's a similar ability and mindset which makes it even more appealing.

"I'd definitely do a similar distance Sky Ride Local again in the future."



### Keith Carrington

"I did the first Bournemouth Let's Ride Further and it was really enjoyable so I came back and did this one.

"It's the people that make it; you're meeting different people all the time. I've met people from Sky Rides and then gone out riding with them again. There's a good camaraderie.

"There's only two Let's Ride Further rides down here which is disappointing as they are good rides. I'd like to see them run more frequently, especially in the autumn.

"It would be a good idea if there were more of this distance in the future."



### Dan Stuchbury

"I started cycling three months ago. I've done a few of the shorter rides, my previous longest is 30 miles so 40 miles was a step up and this was the longest I've ever cycled.

"Not only the location but the social side is a big thing in these rides.

"I'll be doing more if they become available and it would be nice if there were some closer to where I live, like Swindon, Bristol or Bath."





# Might as well jump?

Is it ever OK to jump red lights? Yes, argues *Julian Sayerer*, and while we're at it we need to re-think our one-rule-for-all approach to the Highway Code

Words Julian Sayerer Photos Rupert Fowler

**L**et's get it right out in the open: I jump red lights. To be honest, I jump red lights every day, many times a day. I'm not at all proud of the fact that I jump red lights, but neither am I ashamed of it. I also — for the record — would never dream of cutting up a pedestrian crossing on a green man, nor a car with the right of way and I think the principle of vehicles stopping for humans walking at zebra crossings is a cornerstone of civilisation and one of the few elements of Western society where we might feel some moral superiority over the other countries I've cycled in.

I have been told, in varying degrees of stridence, that by jumping red lights I give cyclists a bad name. I refute the allegation. I would argue that a cyclist waiting in the rain on a deserted junction, for only the sake of a traffic light, is also giving cyclists a bad name by making cyclists look... well... a little bit stupid. Moreover, I am doing far less damage to the reputation of cycling than the tragic and needless deaths of women and men who are no longer alive because a left-turning lorry driver killed them when — at the same time — they pulled away when the lights turned green. Given that most motorists want cyclists out of their way, and that by carefully jumping a light you can get out of their way faster — it's hard to see what all the fuss is about.

## In praise of common sense

In 2013 I was on a panel debate with TfL cycling head, Andrew Gilligan, and motoring journalist, Dan Trent. Gilligan spoke about the smart-technology that lorries would be fitted with to avoid cyclists being killed, making such optimistic noises as seemed to suggest we could put all faith in this technology. Trent (who is as passionate about bicycles as he is cars) made the succinct observation that every

human comes fitted with sensors all around her or his head and that we shouldn't trust to the quick-fixes of technology.

The problem with 'installing' things and even the current cycle campaigning manna of 'building infrastructure', is that it becomes possible for people to point to something tangible having been done, even if the changes haven't actually done any of the things they were intended to achieve.

Cultural change on roads is a thing not necessarily harder to attain, but certainly harder to demonstrate the attainment of than a new arrangement of paint or concrete. This is unfortunate, not least because cultural improvements in road use are as valuable to cyclist safety as kerbstones. This isn't to say that we shouldn't be aspiring to improve the UK's sub-par cycling infrastructure, only that a more moderated view of how to do so might be helpful.

The limitations of putting faith in formal systems were exemplified, rather regrettably, in Transport for London's long-winded efforts to redesign the traffic lights at Bow Interchange. The principle of cyclists permitted a head-start from the lights was accepted in a 2012 redesign, but the resulting traffic light layout left cyclists unsure which light to follow and when, so that the technological fix — badly done — arguably caused as many problems as it set out to solve.

My personal code of ethics on London's

roads has for some time been a simple and twofold highway code: pay attention to the physical laws of moving vehicles, and grant full courtesy to those road users (pedestrians) to whom I pose a danger. With traffic and road safety units low on crime-fighting glamour and taking a good proportion of government cuts to police forces — this might not be the worst cycling advice you receive anytime soon.

Beyond the simple practicalities of staying alive, however, there is also the moral case to be made. I am frequently reminded by driver behaviour of my subordinate position in their understanding of roads, and as a result see little incentive to obey the rules of a system that — from design to fellow user — has such little respect for my place in it. Conversely, when riding in the French countryside, where cyclists are treated with far more courtesy than the UK, I tend to run far fewer red lights and tend to feel rather sheepish and embarrassed when I do because it feels too pointless not to.

## A balanced approach

This common sense approach to road design and traffic law can only be taken so far; we do of course need laws — cyclists certainly must not be exempt from all of them — and we do need intelligent road design that reduces the potential for conflict. We also, however, need to trust to some extent in common sense, or else accept a life less practical and a greater risk of danger all the same.

The new book from cycling commentator Carlton Reid, *Roads Were Not Built For Cars*, sums up in title alone the history of where our roads come from and why motor traffic has no right to the monopoly many drivers assume. The run of our roads — in layout and most laws — has for at least half a century been dictated by and for cars. Traffic lights in

**“The red-amber-green rules did not descend from God, and are not such that they can't be altered or refined”**



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particular are essential in controlling the speed of vehicles that can accelerate and decelerate with no human investment beyond the press of pedals. These vehicles are generally two metres wide, weigh more than a thousand kilos, kill more people internationally than tuberculosis or HIV, will almost certainly kill you when travelling at 40mph and certainly do you some serious injury at even half that.

Cars should have speeds restricted, by traffic lights and other means, to a greater extent than is already so. Solid evidence for the hundreds of deaths that could be averted each year should make this a no-brainer and yet the argument is represented by much media as a tyrannical imposition on the Rights of Man to drive fast and then say sorry and cry in court when people — inevitably — end up dead.

A bicycle, on the other hand, is about a foot

wide, weighs around 10kg, is rarely ridden at speeds above 20mph and struggles to do serious injury to others. Some cyclists do certainly jump red lights in a reckless and indefensible way that — for some peculiar reason — every other cyclist is expected to answer for. In this is a hypocrisy large enough to have become invisible, in that no other car driver would ever be asked to explain the actions of the drunk driver, road-rager or those responsible for fatal collisions. Cyclists have to answer for bad cyclists while bad motorists — a far commoner and graver problem — are seen as outliers.

### Practical solutions

Despite the renegade reputation of red light jumping, the idea of meddling with traffic lights should not be taken as only pie-in-the-sky

anarchism. The Dutch have trialled sensors that extend green light phases for cyclists. San Francisco has major (and accordingly very pleasant) streets clearly signposted on which traffic lights are sequenced to run at 13mph, so that a bicycle might roll along pleasantly and a driver knows that his or her fast acceleration is rendered pointless, as it should be, in order to enhance the safety and enjoyment of the majority of people using an inner city space.

Paris has looked at treating red lights as the equivalent of a give way sign for cyclists, with the cyclist — quite rightly — presumed to be at fault for any incident. The (staunchly libertarian) US state of Idaho has instilled this principle in the 'Idaho Stop', again allowing cyclists to treat reds as a Stop sign.

Traffic planners will routinely and simply alter traffic sequences to deter unnecessary motorised travel coinciding with major events such as the Olympics. The same principle could well be used in urban rush hours to give priority to busy cycle paths crossing large roads; a cost-effective sign to the waiting drivers that there might be a more practical vehicle than a car in a city. The ideal is not so much to jump red lights safely but to have authorities use traffic lights in a way that better reflect the realities of bicycles and other forms of traffic to begin with.

These various experiments from around the world also reflect that the red-amber-green rules of traffic lights did not descend from God, and are not such that they cannot be altered or refined to reflect the characteristics of different vehicles. In towns and cities around the UK, the car is made a terrible transport first choice that creates health problems for those sitting in the car, those breathing the air around the car, and millions of taxpayers maintaining the roads for the car.

The congestion emanating from this large, endemic laziness is borne by all of us and the frustration and anger of those wasting hundreds of hours of their lives in traffic is a further unfortunate by-product of the problem.

The notion of cyclists diligently obeying every single red light belongs in a culture that assumes all road users ought to be inconvenienced to the same degree as those motorists wilfully inconveniencing themselves, and as if to make them less irate about the unavoidable hindrance in what is actually a very selfish transport choice. It shouldn't be so controversial to suggest that red lights don't always make sense for cyclists, and if you want dumb laws changed... first you have to break them. **End**



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# The reluctant sportiviste

**Tom Isitt is happy as a solitary cyclist, so *Cycling Active* thought it was time he tried a sportive to see if he could play nicely with others**

Words and photos Tom Isitt

**I** don't really do joining-in. It's not my thing. With a couple of important exceptions, I generally take my pleasures alone. I feel no great need to belong. This is particularly true of cycling, which for me is an opportunity to escape the incessant babble and noise of modern life, to commune with nature, and to enjoy being on my bike. Generally, I ride alone — the only people I'm prepared to ride with are one or two friends and my sons.

On my two-wheeled travels I frequently encounter club rides; to a man the participants look resolutely glum. And I'm not surprised — spending hours in very close proximity to someone else's back wheel (and backside), unable to enjoy the scenery or even the view ahead, seems like a pretty miserable experience to me. I'm very much with Groucho Marx when it comes to clubs — who famously quipped he could not belong to a club that would accept him as a member. My only experience with mass-participation rides is the London to Brighton, a very worthy event, which was enough to



put me off anything similar for life.

Sportives seem even stranger to my solitary way of thinking — paying money to do something I do anyway for free, riding in close proximity to people whose abilities are unknown, being in a pretend race with a bunch of wannabe racers, and annoying the hell out of everyone else by making the roads almost unusable. Not to mention the ridiculous names, designed to conjure up images of unimaginable macho suffering — The Mendips Massacre, The Richmond Reducer, The Carshalton Crusher. No, sportives are definitely not for me.

So, obviously, the editor signed me up to the end-of-season *Cycling Weekly* Box Hill Original sportive.

“Don’t be such an elitist snob”, he said. “Try it, you might even enjoy it.” Yeah, right. But he had a point... you can’t really curl your lip in disdain at something you’ve never actually tried, so I resolved to give it a go, in the company of my eldest son George.

### A very early start

As a student, George’s only experience of 6.15am on a Sunday morning is when returning from a decent night out, so he was rather unimpressed to be setting off for Sandown Park (the start of the sportive) at this ungodly hour. He was even less impressed that the outside temperature was a brisk 4°C. At least the forecast was for clear skies.

With an elevation gain of just shy of 4,500ft and a route through some of Surrey’s leafier lanes, it had the makings of a pleasant day out. Except for the other 2,000 people on the route, of course.

Never having done a sportive before, neither of us had much idea of what to expect. We certainly didn’t expect a traffic jam at 7.30am waiting to get into Sandown Park. Nor did we expect such a high level of organisation and professionalism. UK Cycling Events, the organiser of the *Cycling*



The calm before the sportive



George ponders the task before him



White Down proved an arduous hurdle

**“You can’t curl your lip in disdain at something you’ve never tried, so I resolved to give it a go and ride a sportive”**

*Weekly* sportive events, clearly has a wealth of experience doing this stuff, and it shows. The registration process took a couple of minutes, there were a couple of trade stands to browse (Assos, SiS, Pinarello, etc), we then got ready and joined the queue at the start.

### Sound of congestion

Setting off in a group of around 20 riders, after a short briefing about signage and safety, the first few miles meandered through London’s semi-suburban Gin-and-Jag belt of Esher and Cobham. It’s a bit like the countryside, but without any of the agrarian annoyances and more mock-Tudor architecture. With the temperature hovering around 5°C (it dipped as low as 2°C according to my Garmin) the first 10 miles were accompanied by the sound of 2,000 cyclists expectorating freely — hawking, coughing, gobbing, hacking, sniffing and firing snot-rockets with reckless abandon. Actually, that’s not strictly true because there appeared to be a significant number of female participants, not one of whom would do anything that gross.

### Three faces of cycling

Beyond the M25 the route became less golfy and more farmy, which was nice, and we got a chance to evaluate our fellow sportivists (sweeping generalisation alert — Ed). They seemed to fall into one of three



In the fast lane: pacing through pastoral parours



categories — Faux-Pros, MAMILs, and Bimblers.

The Faux-Pros are young(ish), thin and fast. They start early, do the Epic route (for them, everything is epic), eschew the feed stops, and ride like fury in order to get the best time they can. They can be recognised by their club clothing and £1,500 wheelsets, and in the unlikely event that you end up in front of them they will pass you at speed a mere 4in from your right elbow.

The majority of sportivistes seem to be MAMILs, or variations thereof. These include a good smattering of FPKWs (Full Pro Kit Weenies), and I was fortunate enough to see Sir Bradley Wiggins, Mark Cavendish, and Alberto Contador. At least, I think it was them. I definitely saw Chris Hoy — honest, I really did! The rest seemed to be middle-aged men much like myself (except for the aversion to joining-in). Mostly riding in groups of two, three or four, they may not be the most experienced cyclists but they clearly loved it and were hugely enthusiastic. It gladdened this old cynic's heart to see so many people prepared to get up in the middle of the night, clearly enjoying their bikes.

It was also reassuring to see the Bimblers (that is in no way meant to be a derogatory term), the antithesis of the Faux-Pros. A rag-tag collection of cheery souls for whom a sportive is not so much a competitive event as just a nice day out, usually with a few friends, they ride in small sociable groups, chatting away as they cycle along. Some were on hybrids, some on road bikes, some even on mtbs, but all seemed united in their unselfconscious enjoyment of riding a bike.

### Fine ride but no coffee

And what of the sportive itself? Well, it was superbly well signposted and marshalled. The route kept us away from most of the Sunday drivers (although White Down and Box Hill



were both quite busy with motorists who had no clue... about anything, apparently). And it took in two hefty climbs that had my legs aching by the end. I'd never ridden Box Hill before, and was surprised by how easy it was,

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**“The feed stops were very well organised, with Sport in Science doing a fine job of keeping everyone going”**

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and how beautiful the road surface is. White Down and Leith Hill, on the other hand, were pretty brutal.

The feed stops were also very well organised and rarely too busy, with Science in Sport products doing a fine job of keeping everyone going. What wouldn't I have given for a decent cup of coffee by mid-morning, though! Surely there's an opportunity there to team up with some kind of mobile barista because I was gagging for a doppio macchiato to accompany my SiS energy bar.

We were also incredibly lucky with the weather, which showed off the Home Counties at their picturesque, autumnal best. With clear blue skies and the woodlands ablaze with red, orange and gold, it couldn't have been a more beautiful day.

### One litter gripe

The standard of riding was generally better than I had expected, too. I saw a





To the finishing sportiviste go the spoils



**Above:** The British weather was on its best behaviour for Tom's first sportive  
**Right:** Snaking a path through the Surrey wilderness  
**Below left:** Refuelling at one of the plentiful feed stops

support organised by a very professional outfit.

Although I can see why some people like the reassurance of a signed route and the presence of service vehicles in case of mechanical problems, I'm not one of them. I enjoy the process of planning a route, or just riding for the sake of riding, and I'm comfortable in my ability to fix things if stuff goes wrong. I enjoy being self-sufficient and I enjoy the peace and solitude afforded by riding my bike.

What did George make of it? "It wasn't as bad as I'd expected it to be," he said. "People seemed really friendly, and there was a nice feeling of camaraderie, particularly on the difficult climbs. Yeah, it was good fun."

Would I do another one? Um... no. I did actually enjoy it, but still don't much care for joining-in, although the L'Eroica (a sportive for classic bikes held on the Strade Bianche of Tuscany) does rather appeal to me.

**End**

couple of riders who had clearly been down in crashes (and had a pretty good try at having my own crash when I ran wide on a corner onto a grass verge). But it was not the same kind of carnage you experience in some mass-participation rides. And despite 2,000 participants, the route never felt particularly busy.

On the down side, the littering is absolutely inexcusable. There were too many energy bar and gel wrappers on the roadsides for it to have been accidental littering, so there are clearly people taking part who would rather throw their rubbish on the ground than tuck it into a pocket and take it home. I find it sad that the pros do it during races, but for people to do it on a sportive is appalling.

The other thing that surprised me was the chorus of screeet-screet-screet

noises that seemed to accompany a surprising number of riders, for whom the benefits of chain lube are clearly a mystery. I mean really, how difficult is it to lube your chain before an event? Maybe it's just me, but I can't bear my bike to make any kind of noise. All I want to hear is the gentle thrum of tyres on tarmac and my own breathing. With that, and the cacophony of snotting, coughing and spitting, I remembered why I generally ride alone.

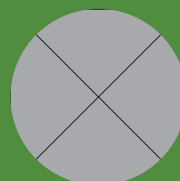
### Sportive convert?

The saying "don't knock it until you've tried it" is particularly apposite in the case of me and sportives. My snobbish bigotry had prepared me for a fairly shambolic few hours of two-wheeled ineptitude, but I was forced to rethink my attitude. What I discovered was thousands of people enjoying themselves on their bikes.

I find the super-competitive element faintly ridiculous (if you're that competitive, get a licence and go racing), but otherwise it just seemed to be a fun day out with the routing and

## Tips for newbie sportivistes

- If your furthest ride to date has been 45 miles, don't enter the Epic category to tackle 105 miles
- Take a close look at the elevation profile and total altitude gain. Even relatively short distances can be really tough if there's a lot of climbing involved
- It's not a three-week Grand Tour, so don't go overboard. A few longish rides in the weeks leading up to a sportive will give your body a chance to get used to longer distances
- Put some lube on that chain! Maybe give the bike a once-over if you're handy with the tool kit, or get it serviced a couple of weeks beforehand
- Don't litter. You're not a pro, so take it home with you.
- For more details about sportives, preparation, bookings and so on, see [www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/sportives](http://www.cyclingweekly.co.uk/sportives)





# The smart way to train

Words Chris Sidwells Photo Jesse Wild

**At the download of an app and push of a button an array of statistics is available for us to monitor our fitness. Chris Sidwells looks at how they could help maximise performance**

**F**or the guru of no-frills cycling, Raleigh pro Ian Wilkinson, the appeal of one particular app is simple to understand. "People get hung up about heart rate and power output, but I reckon that unless you really know what you are doing, or you've got a coach to help you analyse the numbers you get off those things, you can waste a lot of time and end up training badly," he says.

"For me, if you want something where you can use the information you're better off with Strava. It shows if you are progressing and, if you use it sensibly and not let it use you, it helps you make solid efforts because you try to improve your times. That's a great kick for your training.

"You're far more likely to pull the stops out going for a Strava segment than, say, doing just another three-minute or five-minute interval. It's free as well."

He got us thinking. Can you use Strava or Ritmo in a constructive way to improve your fitness? And what other training apps are there that can help cyclists?

## Knowledge is power

*Scientia potentia est.* This Latin phrase, first attributed to the Elizabethan polymath Sir Francis Bacon, is commonly translated as "knowledge is power". It's a phrase that all cyclists in training should be familiar with. It is probably written on the walls inside the Team Sky bus.

Performance knowledge requires measurement and numbers and Strava gives you a variety of numbers on every ride. Strava numbers are distance ridden, average speed, height gained and speed along sections of road or trail called segments. You can use them in two different ways for training: to get a long-term picture of your progress and for specific interval training sessions that boost different physical capacities.

Summing up Strava's role in recording your progress, Wilkinson adds: "Most cyclists tend to train on set routes; routes that they know take a certain amount of time. But if you use Strava on them, you can see from the trend of day-to-day times for segments whether you are getting faster or slower. Don't worry about individual drops and don't get carried away by a single improvement — it's a general trend you are looking for."

## Interval application

Strava works with a number of devices that store information from rides. You then upload to the Strava website — [www.strava.com](http://www.strava.com) — your ride from the device. To check your overall fitness progress go through segments of each ride from time to time, click on 'my results' and see how you are doing. Each of your performances on any segment is recorded with the date it was done, so once you've ridden any segment a number of times you will see a trend.

If you are getting slower then look for reasons why. If you are getting faster you're doing things right, which is very motivating; but an even greater motivational role comes when you use Strava for interval training.

A great workout that boosts your VO2 max — which is the maximum amount of oxygen you can process, and is the physical capacity you use when making big efforts like climbing



## Pros on Strava



A growing number of pro racers use Strava and they also use it in connection with power meters, which provides some very interesting information. Strava estimates a user's power on the basis of information provided by them, but it isn't accurate and therefore it's not really a usable number. However, when you see a lightning flash symbol next to somebody's power output it is genuine information from a power meter.

The best time for each Strava segment is called a KoM or QoM — standing for King or Queen of the Mountains. Last year a lot of British Strava-nuts (and there are many) looked forward with dread at how their KoMs would fair when the Tour de France

came to town last summer. So post-stage two we looked at the Tour-rated climbs, those that counted for the polka-dot jersey, along the route and took the Strava KoM segment that compared closest to them to see how the Tour's Strava users stack up against our home-grown warriors.

Before you read on it's worth noting that the wind on stage two wasn't favourable on any of the climbs, and Strava users know, if they are honest, that every KoM is set with the help of a roaring tailwind nowadays.

### Côte de Blubberhouses [www.strava.com/segments/7589825](http://www.strava.com/segments/7589825)

2.1km at 6 per cent gradient  
KoM: Andy Cunningham, 23.5kph  
First Tour rider: Lars Boom in 24th place, 20.2kph

### Côte de Oxenhope Moor [www.strava.com/segments/3598184](http://www.strava.com/segments/3598184)

2.3km at 6 per cent gradient  
KoM: Ian Field, 22.9kph  
First Tour rider: Steven Kruijswijk in ninth, 19.9kph

### Côte de Ripponden [www.strava.com/segments/799634](http://www.strava.com/segments/799634)

1.3km at 10 per cent gradient





## Other cycling fitness apps

### MAPMYRIDE



Works with any Bluetooth Smart sensor, or ANT+ sensors with a plug-in. It has a big stock of downloadable routes and helps you plan new ones. It can provide turn-by-turn directions through an earpiece and tracks food intake, weight and other fitness parameters.

### GOOGLE MAPS



This is the gold standard for cycling navigation tools. It even plots bike-friendly routes that include cycle-only trails where possible.

### CYCLEMETER



This turns your iPhone into a cycle computer and you don't need anything else. All the information is processed and kept on your phone.

### WAHOO FITNESS



This records riding data and can upload to Strava, MapMyFitness, TrainingPeaks and MyFitnessPal. Download this on your iPhone and you don't need buy any other device.

### MYFITNESSPAL



Great if you are serious about losing weight. It calculates the calories you need, taking into account the exercise you input, to lose given amounts of weight at different rates. It also shows how many calories you have left to eat at any point during the day.

a longish hill or trying to cross a gap in a road race — is a series of intervals from one to five minutes in length. Strava really helps in a session like this.

Note where the segments are on your regular rides, choose ones that are between one and five minutes long and try to beat your best on each one. Take at least the duration of the effort for recovery between each segment.

In the days before they had teams of physiologists and coaches, most pro racers believed that racing was the best training. Using Strava segments for intervals provides a race-like stimulus that encourages you to give your best. Build speed to your best average at the start of each segment, then dig deep to improve it right through to the end. Using segments like this is great training for pace-judgement, which is a crucial skill for any racer. It really helps in sportives, too.

You can also use Strava for longer efforts that boost your ability to sustain a high pace on a long climb or in a time trial. This is sometimes called threshold training and is a physical capacity that underpins your overall cycling fitness.

Map out two circuits, one that takes around 20 minutes to ride going as hard as you can maintain constantly for 20 minutes; the other should be a one-hour circuit, done at the pace

you can just maintain for one hour. Ride the two circuits using your Strava-compatible device, then use Strava to turn each circuit into a segment. Use the circuits for 20-minute and one-hour efforts, trying to beat your best each time you do them. The 'my results' tab automatically records your progress.

### Ritmo

Ritmo gives you a number for each ride you upload. It's a numerical expression of your performance on a ride, arrived at by using algorithms that factor in terrain, speed and distance. A Ritmo number is an easy-to-use performance marker.

The number scale goes from 0 to 28, and a Ritmo of 11 means the same in Leeds or La Paz. It's like a golf handicap; a Ritmo number going down means you are getting fitter; going up, the opposite. The number has ride differences factored out, so a flat 10-mile blast compares directly with a 90-mile hill-fest. Each ride you do earns a Ritmo number and your overall performance is measured by taking your best three numbers to provide an average.

A Ritmo number is a more precise way of measuring the overall effectiveness of your training programme than comparing trends on Strava segments. And Ritmo numbers can flag up weaknesses. A Ritmo of 10 on a flat 20-mile ride, and one of 20 on a hilly 50-mile ride could mean your stamina and hill-climbing needs work. If that's so, with Ritmo you have a number to work on to improve it.

Numbers are powerful training aids. British Cycling's performance department uses figures every day. Numbers don't lie; numbers are something you can see, relate to and talk about. Once you know a number that knowledge provides power, and you use the power to change the number.

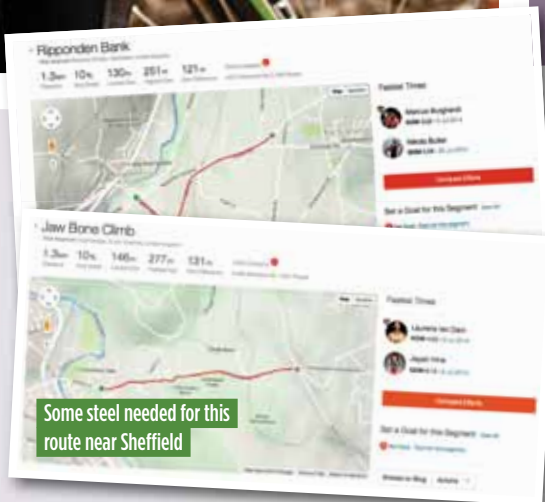
Details on how to sign up for and use Ritmo can be found at [www.cyclingweekly.cc/ritmo](http://www.cyclingweekly.cc/ritmo)

### App responsibly

Used properly, free apps like Ritmo and Strava can really help to improve your fitness, but don't become a slave to them. Trying to do your best average speed on every ride; beating your best on every segment will only serve to turn your training grey. You will end up training in a constant grey zone, not hard enough to improve and not slow enough to build other capacities, like cycling efficiency. Counterproductively, you could also end up slowly wearing yourself down.

Using apps to post your training: share it and record your total miles. The information acts like a training diary that can be used to pinpoint the sessions or the type of training prior to a performance improvement. But only focus on beating your best times in specific sessions, like the one to five-minute intervals, or the 20-minute or one-hour tests. Do some long steady rides, throw in some short but very high intensity intervals of 15 to 40 seconds into the mix, add some rest days and you have a very effective training regime.

If you haven't been bitten by the Strava bug, give it a go. Buy a Strava-compatible device if you haven't got one, which is the only outlay, or you can use a smartphone, iPhone or Android; the rest is free. Used constructively Strava and/or Ritmo are great ways to monitor your training and improve your fitness without any extra expense. **End**



KoM: Marcus Berghardt, 21.3kph  
First Tour rider: Marcus Berghardt

#### Côte de Greetland [www.strava.com/segments/2671152](http://www.strava.com/segments/2671152)

1.5km at 6 per cent gradient  
KoM: Niki Terpstra, 27.3kph  
First Tour rider: Niki Terpstra

#### Côte de Oughtibridge [www.strava.com/segments/2076807](http://www.strava.com/segments/2076807)

1.3km at 10 per cent gradient  
KoM: Laurens ten Dam, 20kph  
First Tour rider: Laurens ten Dam



# Lower leg strength

**Achilles and calf injuries aren't as prevalent as knee and back issues but if left untreated they could turn into quite significant injuries and wreck your season. Get them sorted now**

Words Robert Hicks Photos Mike Prior

**C**ycling won't necessarily cause Achilles and calf injuries, but it can exacerbate existing issues, which is why it's important to treat them straight away.

The Achilles tendon is a long band of tissue that runs down the back of your calf and connects to your heel bone. It's the thickest and strongest tendon in the body and is able to withstand at least 10 times the body weight of an individual.

The job of the Achilles tendon is simple: to help raise your heel as you walk and also assist in pushing up the toes and lifting the rear of the heel.

However, complications can arise if the tendon becomes damaged, and unfortunately, it can take a long time to repair unless rehabilitated properly.

## Spotting the signs

The most common symptom of an Achilles tendon rupture is a painful snap at the back of the heel. This hurts, and trust us, you will know if it ruptures.

Fortunately, this is a very rare occurrence in cycling, as there usually isn't enough force put through the Achilles to cause such impact.

However, it is possible to bruise and damage an Achilles through cycling, mainly through over-exertion, which can weaken it, leaving it more susceptible to tears.

You may also experience pain in the tendon if your pedalling technique isn't quite right, often a result of 'ankling' — where the toe points upwards at the top of the stroke and downwards at the bottom.

Discomfort may also arise by having your cleats too far forward, which may encourage you to pedal with your toes, putting too much stress through your tendons.

Achilles tendon injuries can also result from overuse of the calves, which can occur during long bouts of cycling, continuously riding big gears, or lots of climbing.

It's true that cycling can strengthen the Achilles tendon by

helping to build surrounding muscles to support the tissue. Cycling also helps develop muscular, efficient calves, which will help limit the risk of such injuries.

However, if you have a pre-existing Achilles injury, or it's perhaps inflamed from a heavy bout of cycling or another sporting activity, then cycling can significantly worsen the condition.

Appropriate clothing can be worn to help minimise such injuries — most notably the right fitting shoes, which are set up correctly. Correct saddle height will also reduce the chances of damaging the Achilles, limiting the amount of stress you place through your lower leg.

However, the best way to avoid these injuries is to condition your Achilles and your calf muscles so they have the required amount of flexibility, mobility and strength.

This can be achieved through a number of exercises

**Top tip**  
Achilles tendon injuries can be extremely painful, affecting balance and coordination. Simple tasks such as walking can be tricky and playing sport is totally out of the question.

## Calf stretches

A simple set of calf stretches will help reduce the pull and tension on the Achilles tendon. When performing calf stretches it's important to work on both major calf muscles as they can be tightened, affecting the function of the tendon.

### Gastrocnemius

They don't come any simpler than the push-against-the-wall stretch. However, it's mighty effective.

■ Start by leaning forwards against the wall, with the leg you want to stretch straightened. The front leg should be bent.

■ It's important that you keep your rear heel (straight leg) on the floor, slightly turned out.

■ To deepen the stretch, lean further into the wall. You should feel a stretch in the calf muscle.

■ Hold for 20 seconds, and then release. Repeat twice.



### Soleus

Although it may look similar to the first one, there are some slight differences, which will help deepen the stretch of the second calf muscles.

■ Again, lean forwards against the wall with the leg you want to stretch out behind you. Unlike the first stretch, both legs should be bent.

■ Keep your rear heel on the floor, slightly turned out.

■ Lean into the wall and push your weight into your heels. To deepen the stretch, flex your rear knee until you feel the stretch in the lower part of your leg.



## Achilles isometric exercise

This exercise is very good for building strength in the calf muscles and resilience in your Achilles tendon. By using your own body weight, you will reduce the risk of overloading the tendon, and therefore reduce the risk of causing injury or discomfort. Performing this exercise will engage the gastrocnemius (superficial contraction phase) and soleus (deep muscle phase) as well as creating manageable pressure to your Achilles tendon.

### Superficial

■ Start flat-footed before slowly raising up onto your tiptoes, going as high as you can go.  
■ Slowly lower half the way back down and hold this position for 30 seconds — with your legs **straight**. This is where you will activate your gastrocnemius muscle.



### Deep muscle

■ Start flat-footed before slowly raising up onto your tiptoes, going as high as you can go.  
■ Slowly lower half the way back down and hold this position for 30 seconds — with your **knees** slightly bent. This is where you will activate your soleus muscle.



## Calf and Achilles stretch

This exercise will help engage a deeper stretch as well as providing resistance to build

strength and conditioning in your calf muscles and Achilles tendon. Products such as

TheraBands work very well, as they are flexible enough and can withstand a

fair amount of force. However, if you don't have one, a towel will suffice.

### Strengthen the Achillies and calf muscles

■ Sit on the floor with one knee extended.  
■ Make a loop with the band and securely attach one end of the loop over the leg you want to work on.  
■ Pull the band or towel slowly towards you; it should pull your toes up and slightly back and you'll feel a deep stretch in your calf muscles. You will also feel your Achilles stretch. Hold this position for 15-20 seconds.

By placing the band at different angles it will help increase mobility and strength around the Achilles and ankle as well as the calf muscles.



### Strengthen the inner ankle muscles

■ Sit on the floor with one knee extended.  
■ Make a loop with the band and place exercising foot inside loop.  
■ Pull your ankle inward against the resistance band.



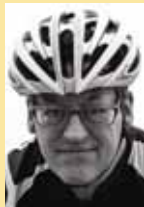
### Strengthen the outer ankle muscles

■ Sit on floor with one knee extended.  
■ Make a loop with the band and place exercising foot inside loop.  
■ Push your ankle outward against the resistance of the band.



# A few thoughts on...

## Cornering



Tom Isitt has survived 45 years on two wheels, including a 12-year stint as a motorcycle journalist and a (very) brief spell as a messenger in London. He doesn't profess to be an advanced rider or an expert; he just happens to have a wealth of experience and an ability to think about the mechanics of riding in an analytical way.

Continuing our series on bike-handling skills, this month **Tom Isitt** looks at the joys of cornering

Words Tom Isitt Photos Andy Jones, Rupert Fowler

**L**et's face it — cornering is the fun bit when it comes to cycling. The feeling of exhilaration as you pitch your bike into a turn, hold the line, look for the apex, and then power out towards the next corner... it's a large part of what makes cycling wonderful. When you get it right, the sensation is intoxicating; when you get it wrong, the sensation can range from mild disappointment to extreme pain.

And once again, it's your brain that is the secret to faster, safer cornering, and the subsequent performance benefits. An understanding of the forces involved during cornering, and the ability to analyse (and react to) the complex feedback you get from your bike, and the world around you, can make you a better and faster rider without ever having to

explore the limits of your VO2 max or lactate threshold.

The first thing to understand is that a bike is subject to self-stabilising dynamics and above a certain speed will try to go straight ahead. The gyroscopic effect of the turning wheels and the bike's steering geometry (specifically the amount of trail) will encourage a bike to steer straight until either the speed drops to the point where the bike topples, or the rider puts in some steering input. These forces are small on a bicycle, but the faster you go the more difficult they are to overcome.

In order to overcome your bike's self-stabilising dynamics and make a turn at anything above walking speed you have to do something that is both counter-intuitive and also completely instinctive to anyone who can actually

ride a bike... you have to counter-steer. Most of us don't even know we're doing it, but in order to tip the bike into a right-hander, we actually have to destabilise the bike first by making an almost imperceptible steering movement to the left. This is usually done simply by leaning very slightly harder on the right-hand handlebar, which pushes the steering very slightly to the left. As we do this the bike tips slightly to the right, initiating the right turn. At this point we then begin positive steering to maintain our right turn, and both centrifugal and centripetal forces come into play (see diagrams).

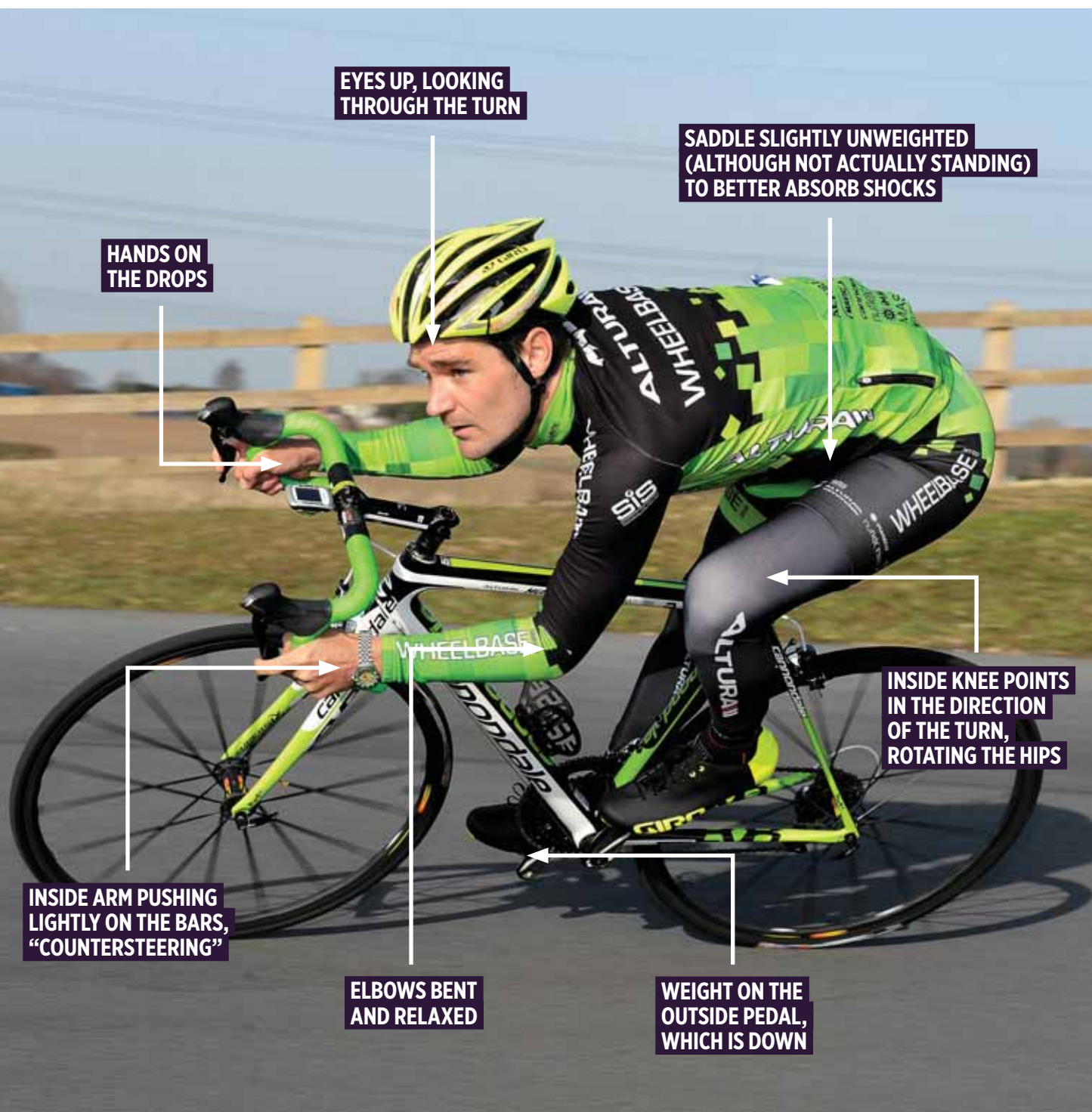
The other force we need to consider is friction — the friction between the bike's tyres and the road surface. This is the thing that gives us acceleration and braking, and which prevents us crashing when we lean the bike over. When we looked at braking last month we saw that wider tyres running lower pressures gave more braking grip, and the same applies to cornering. A narrow 23mm rear tyre inflated to 115psi will have a contact patch of around 3.5cm<sup>2</sup> (depending on rider weight), whereas a 25mm tyre inflated to 85psi will have a contact patch of around 6.8cm<sup>2</sup>, which is a lot of extra rubber helping you stay upright.

OK, so that's the sciencey bit done, let's now look at what we've all been doing without even thinking about it, and see how we can do it better. Corners can be divided into four parts — approach, entry, apex and exit — each of which needs careful consideration, and they need to be stitched together as seamlessly as possible to create a smooth cornering technique.

### Approach

There's a corner coming up. The first thing you need to know is which way it goes, and how tight it is. If you're climbing, you don't need to worry too much because you won't be carrying much speed into the corner. But on the flat, and even more so when descending, you need to know whether you'll have to scrub off some speed, and you'll need to know where to position





yourself on the road in order to get round the corner quickly and safely.

Look for visual clues about the corner — street lights, telegraph poles and trees usually follow the line of the road, if other vehicles ahead are braking hard then the corner may be tight, are there any relevant road signs? If you have a bike computer with sat-nav mapping, zooming in on the map page will show you what's coming up (but don't take it as gospel).

Scan the approaching corner for hazards — side turnings, parked vehicles, dodgy road surfaces, livestock, farm gates. And check behind you... you don't want to be adjusting your line mid-corner with a

**"Ideally you want to be on the drops through the corner because this gives you more control and lowers your centre of mass"**

Transit van trying to overtake you. You may want to move nearer to the crown of the road to discourage a vehicle behind attempting an unsafe overtake.

All through your ride you will have been monitoring the road surface, so now look ahead to see if there is any discernable change as the corner approaches, or if there is an unusual camber to the corner. Be aware that

local councils favour chip-and-seal road repairs these days, and the surplus stone chippings end up at the side of the road, or down the middle. These loose chippings are potentially lethal, so try and pick a line that follows in the wheeltracks of others. Recent heavy rain can also wash stones and mud onto the road, leading to a similar problem.

This is also the time to adjust your position on the bike. Ideally you want to be on the drops through the corner because this gives you better control and lowers your centre of mass. If you're not comfortable on your drops (and there are a lot of people who aren't), then stay on the hoods, bend your elbows, and tuck down as much as you can. Either



way, relax. Being relaxed gives you better bike control, and makes crashing a less damaging experience if it all goes wrong. Easy to say, not quite as easy to do. Again, experience and practice are your friends.

### Entry

With all corners, you are aiming for speed, smoothness and safety. Ideally you want to start out wide, cut in to the apex, then run wide out (all within the parameters of what you consider to be safe). This technique gives the widest possible radius for the corner, the best view through the corner, and gives you the best chance of a fast and safe exit.

As you approach the turning-in point you may need to scrub off some speed. It's important that you get most of this done while still upright and travelling straight — see last month's issue for an in-depth look at braking (or buy a back-issue here: [cyclingweekly.ipcshop.co.uk/shop/magazines/cycling-active-magazine](http://cyclingweekly.ipcshop.co.uk/shop/magazines/cycling-active-magazine)). You may want to drag the brakes past the entry point for the corner, even as far as the apex itself, and this is OK as long as you do it smoothly and evenly, and without upsetting the fore-aft balance of your bike.

If you brake hard with the front brake while leaned over, the rear wheel will unload and probably lose traction. You will then be 'backing it in' to the corner. You'll also be landing on your arse shortly afterwards. Or you'll just put too much load onto a front tyre already struggling for grip and it will slide out from under you. Generally speaking, it's better to go into a corner 5mph too slow than 5mph too fast.

At the same time as you are braking for the corner you should also be thinking about gearing for the exit — if it's a tight turn you may need to drop down a couple of gears on the entry to allow you to get the power down quickly and efficiently on the exit. Practice, experience, and constant analysis will help you get to the point where it becomes automatic.

As you adjust your speed for the impending corner you need to be looking as far ahead as possible. Keep the apex in your peripheral vision and look through the corner to the exit. If there are vehicles, or other riders, in front of you DO NOT look at them — you will magnify any mistake they make. Be aware of them, and keep them in your peripheral vision, but look past them to the exit of the corner. We do this because generally speaking we tend to go where we're looking, and also because we need to be sure that there are no hazards on the exit. We also need to know what's coming up after the corner so that we can start setting up for whatever comes next.

At this point, you are identifying the apex, looking through to the exit, and are tipping the bike into the turn. Obviously you have the inside pedal at the top of its stroke to avoid grounding it, you have your weight primarily on

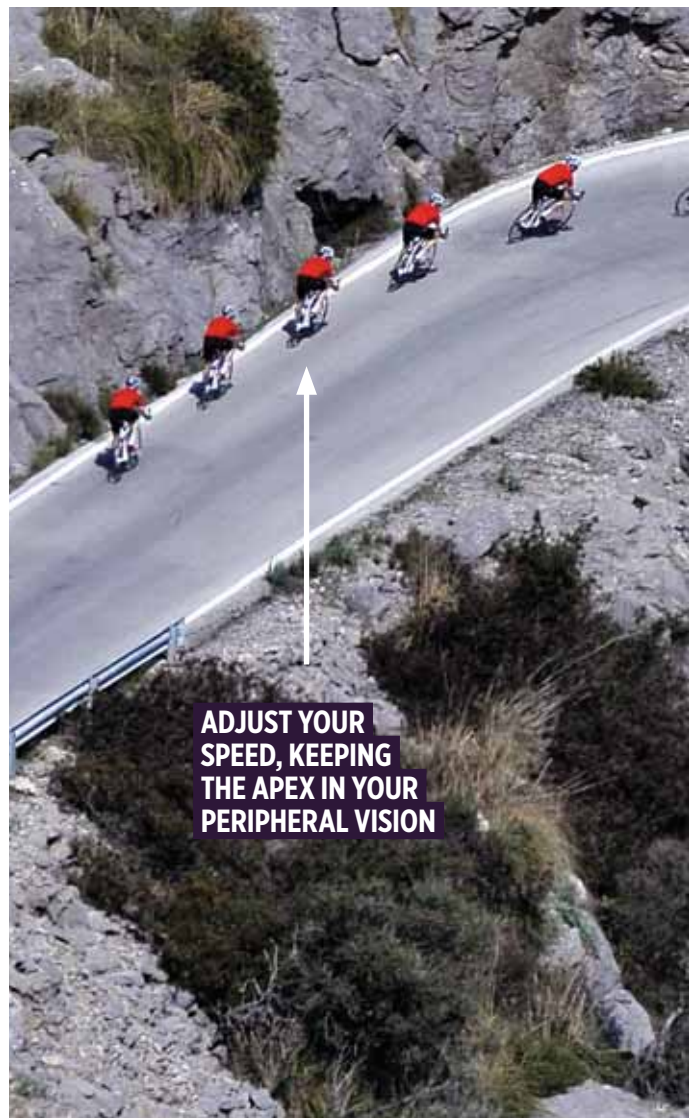
the outside pedal, and you are leaning slightly more on the handlebar on the inside of the turn than on the other handlebar. Flopping your inside knee outwards is a good idea — it moves your centre of mass inwards very slightly, acts as a sort of air-brake and rotates the pelvis in the direction of the turn, allowing you to turn in a bit more easily. Aggregation of marginal gains, and all that.

### Apex

Where the apex is on a corner depends on a number of factors. If the corner is an open right-hander, and there's no traffic around, you can use the full width of the road and make the apex on the opposite carriageway. If you can't see the whole corner clearly, you need to work within your own carriageway AND leave room for manoeuvre (in case an oncoming car runs wide onto your carriageway or cuts a corner). You also need to have some room to manoeuvre in case you suddenly find a sunken manhole cover (or similar) on your line mid-corner.

Now comes the \$64,000 question — how far over can I lean my bike? The simple answer is: much further than you think you can (Editor's Note: *Cycling Active* accepts no responsibility for anyone actually following this advice). On a dry road with a grippy surface, and with some good quality tyres, you should be able to lean around 45 degrees from vertical. The limiting factors are your tyres, the road surface, and your fear threshold.

There really is only one way to gauge how far over you can lean your bike — try it. The problem is that the only sure-fire way to find out how far



**ADJUST YOUR SPEED, KEEPING THE APEX IN YOUR PERIPHERAL VISION**



**Keep a low centre of gravity for efficient cornering**

you can lean it is by leaning it slightly too far. The down side of this is that by leaning it too far, you've actually crashed. Few of us are prepared to put in that level of practice and research, so the next best thing is to take a mental snapshot every time you take a corner. Store these in your memory and try to superimpose what you are currently seeing on top of the mental image of what you know to be safe. Things like lampposts and road signs are generally vertical, so it's fairly easy to gauge when you're getting close to 45 degrees if there are any of those tell-tales around. If not, you just have to rely on that archive of mental snapshots.

Continue to look through the corner as you metaphorically kiss the apex, and at this point you need to be looking past your exit point to see what's coming next. Again, don't look at the apex point, but keep it in your peripheral vision and be aware of it. And try not to make your apex point too near the kerb or verge because of detritus at the sides of the road, and to give yourself room to get it slightly wrong.

### Exit

If the road straightens out, you will want to get back on the pedals as





## What not to do

Do not follow vehicles or bikes in front of you. You will magnify any mistakes they may make.

FACTOR IN ROAD SURFACE, TYRE GRIP AND A MAXIMUM 45° LEAN

ASSESS THE ROAD AHEAD BEFORE PUTTING DOWN THE POWER AGAIN

quickly as possible. Again, your mental snapshot can help you decide at what point you can start pedalling while still leaned over. If there is a series of open corners you might be thinking about straight-lining them (traffic permitting), so you need to be aware of what is around you if you're going to do that.

Assuming you haven't tried to lean your bike over too far mid-turn, it is on the exit of a corner that you are most likely to become unstuck. If you've got it right you'll hit the apex and then drift out to the exit, carrying as much speed as you can and leaving a few inches spare to your outside as you power onto the straight. That's what we're all aiming for, but it doesn't always work out like that. An unobserved adverse camber, a decreasing-radius turn, the need to avoid a pothole — these are the sort of things that can cause you to end up running wide on the exit. Or simple inattention or over-enthusiasm. We've all done it — carried too much speed into a corner, missed the apex, and run hopelessly wide approaching the exit. Now what?

The most important thing is to avoid target-fixation. The act of looking at the place where you think you're going to crash draws you inexorably to that spot. It's a well-known phenomenon,

## **“And now comes the \$64,000 question — how far can I lean my bike? The answer: much further than you think you can”**

and all too common (I've done it on more than one occasion). So, DO NOT look at where you think you're going to crash, keep looking at where you want to go. If it becomes clear that at current speed and trajectory you're not going to make it, you have to start making choices — stand it up or lie it down. Your immediate surroundings should make the decision for you, and in your head you will subconsciously perform a surprisingly complex and very rapid risk-assessment.

If, by running wide, you risk drifting into oncoming traffic or going off the side of a mountain, you have no choice but to keep leaning further and further. Often you'll be able to lean much further than you expected, and if you manage to stay upright then fix that mental snapshot in your head for future use. If you do run out of grip, at least it will be a 'low-side' crash more likely to cause road-rash than multiple broken

bones. You're also less likely to flip over the Armco and fall 300ft down an alp (you'll get wedged under the Armco instead, which is marginally better).

If your surroundings are more benign, you might think about standing the bike upright and braking hard before leaning it over again. To be honest, this only works if you've got lots of space because by the time you have stood the bike up and braked, you've run out of road. But it is possible to take to the grass verge if necessary, at which point your (possibly untested) cyclo-cross skills come to the fore. Worst case scenario: stand it up, brake hard, prepare to bunny-hop, and aim for the softest thing you can see.

A well-taken corner, where all the elements come together in a moment of sinuous, fluid magic, is a wonderful thing, and something that makes cycling so rewarding. Understanding the science behind cornering allows us to take a more analytical and informed approach to our riding, which allows us to get the best from ourselves and our bikes.

**NEXT MONTH:**  
Climbing and descending



# Get inter active

Download our digital edition, anytime, anywhere



# Increase your leg speed

This session is a great warm-up for longer rides as well as helping you to spin your legs faster

Words Hannah Reynolds Photo Mike Prior

### Why?

Pedalling faster is more efficient and less tiring for your muscles but fast legs don't always come naturally; most people when they begin cycling pedal around 50-60rpm whereas experienced riders are comfortable at 80-90rpm and pro riders even faster.

Adding some fast pedalling to your regular rides can help you to increase your cadence but also makes for a good warm-up. Warming up gently helps to increase muscle and core temperature, blood flow and helps your body start to use oxygen more efficiently, as well as help you to feel more alert and decrease your reaction time. Whether on the

turbo or the road it is a good to solid warm-up before going hell for leather in a tough session.

### How?

Start in a gear that feels relatively easy as you will not be changing gear during the session, just working on your cadence. Begin pedalling at a cadence you feel comfortable with and then move up through a range of cadences using the same gear/resistance until you reach three sprints of 150rpm+.

Start with five minutes at your chosen cadence then increase your rpm by five every two minutes. When you get to 12 minutes go all-out at full revs for 30 seconds, drop back down to your preferred cadence for 90 seconds and repeat three times.

### Tip

In the 'rev out' intervals pedal as fast as you can until you start bouncing up and down in the saddle, try to stay smooth

### How often?

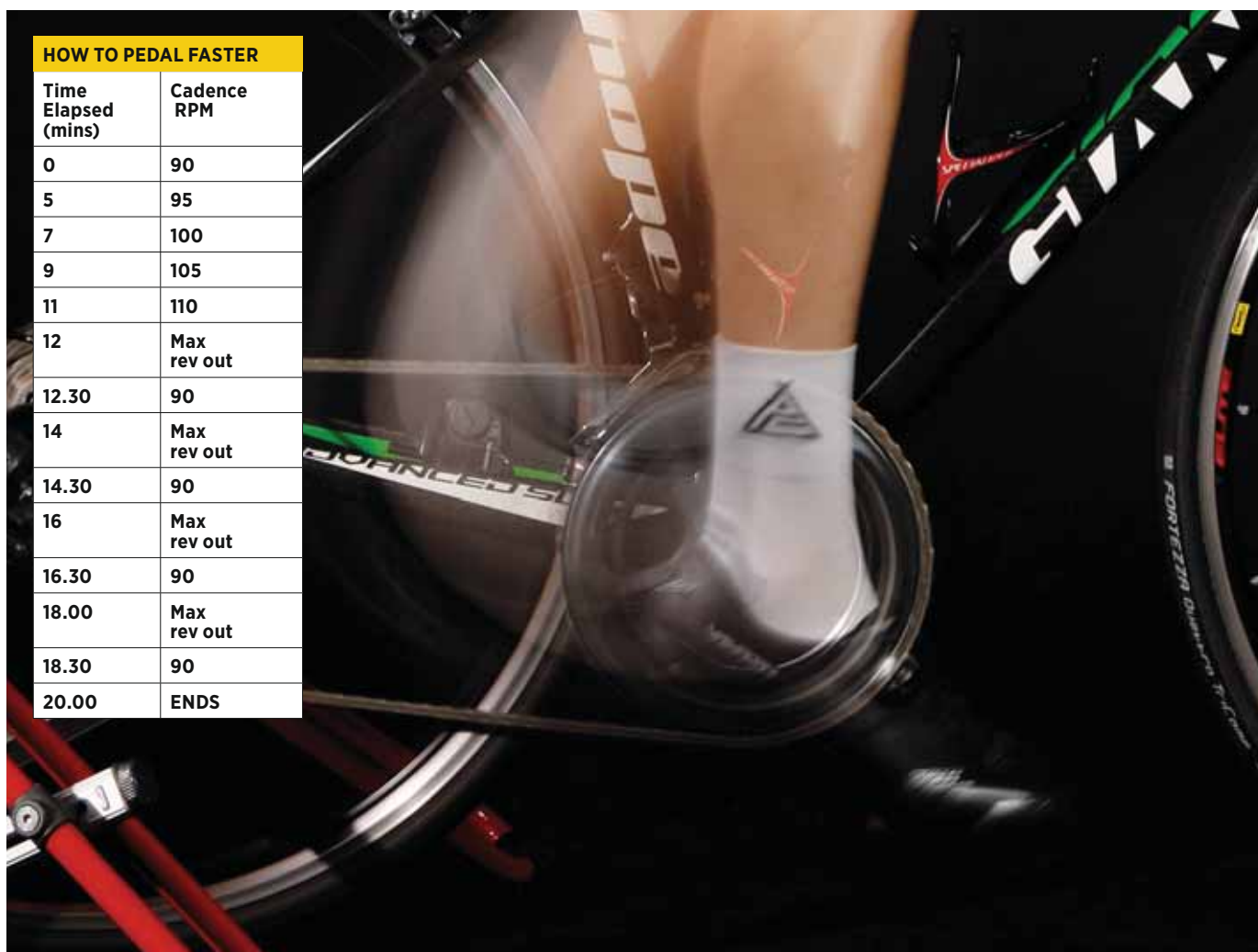
- 2-3 times a week
- 20 minutes
- Use before events or hard sessions
- Increase the rpm that you start with as your legs become more fluid at high cadences.

### When?

As this is a great warm-up it is tempting to say do this before every ride but realistically that won't always happen. Do it at the start of each turbo session or before an event when you want to be well prepared and ready at the start. It is also a good recovery session, so if you want to stretch your legs and ride your bike but are tired this will help to spin out any aches without increasing your fatigue.

### HOW TO PEDAL FASTER

Time Elapsed (mins)	Cadence RPM
0	90
5	95
7	100
9	105
11	110
12	Max rev out
12.30	90
14	Max rev out
14.30	90
16	Max rev out
16.30	90
18.00	Max rev out
18.30	90
20.00	ENDS





# 3 OF THE BEST

## Low-alcohol beers

**Is it possible to drink beer without the alcohol content or the calories in it, and it still taste as good as a regular beer? *Cycling Active* tested three to find out**

Words Steve Shrubsall

**W**ith the festive season and its decadent range of edibles and quaffables having been successfully negotiated, it's time to make small amendments to the diet, perchance to puncture the ever-inflating beach ball that now protrudes from your midriff. Indeed, the turkey and stuffing sandwiches have taken their toll, not to mention the triple helpings of cream-drenched Christmas pudding, and the beer... the beer! Your

empties had to be extracted with a civil engineering crane...

There's no escaping the fact that beer is marvellous stuff. However, it offers very little in the way of nutritional value and has a tendency to make one talk nonsense and fall over a lot. Coupled with the fact that it's the prime suspect in the 'mysterious case of your rapidly swelling stomach', beer doesn't really have a leg to stand

on; perhaps it isn't so marvellous after all. Yet, for its plentiful faults, cracking a cold bottle of lager after a taxing day at work is one of life's little treats.

Here we will attempt to find a happy medium. We have taken three non-alcoholic beers in order to ascertain which provides the most authentic supping experience; and at the same time quashing that oh-so-meddlesome 'waking up in a ditch' scenario.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

#### Taste

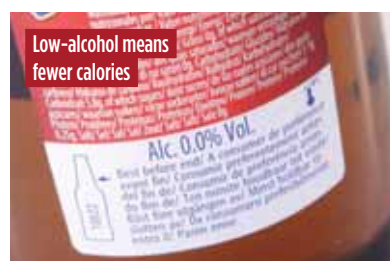
We want something with flavour; with a backbone; with balls. We don't want a merely tolerable imitation of our favourite lager. After having put paid to several gargantuan slurps and parting with a tumultuous belch, we want to come up for air declaring our newfound love of alcohol-free beer. We are quite hopeful about this.

#### Nutrition

Non-alcoholic lagers are comparatively low in calories, sometimes containing half the calorific content of a bog-standard bottle of beer. They can be high in vitamin B as well, which eases stress and helps to prevent heart disease, while some low-alcohol beers also incorporate isotonic properties in them.

#### Availability

Because we, the elite few, are in the decided minority, you will find that the shelves of your local supermarket aren't exactly rife with low-alcohol product. We factor in the availability of these beverages as part of our test.



## Erdinger, alcohol free £1.60 (500ml)

A stalwart among the tap selection of most good pubs, Erdinger is the chosen tipple of many wheat beer drinkers. We were keen to determine if the German brewery was able to replicate its sweet flavours with the 0.5 per cent offering.

Bottle opening was rewarded with a satisfying hiss, and the beer, when poured into a glass, kept a frothy head meaning ample carbonation was present. Upon the initial sip we were treated to a lively sweetness that stimulated the palate and yielded a pleasing aftertaste.

It is a brew rich in vitamins and is branded as an isotonic drink — providing carbohydrate and sodium for extra energy. One 500ml bottle contains just 125 calories. Low-alcohol Erdinger is available in single bottles from most high-street supermarkets.

8

**A solid contender; nice flavours and carbonation**



www.alcoholfree.co.uk

## Bavaria, £2.00 (4x330ml)

It smelt like beer, it looked like beer, it tasted like beer — and after the bottle had been polished off in several gratifying gulps, we were awed that our inhibitions remained intact. Exhibiting tangy flavours with a clean and crisp finish, the Bavaria is an extremely palatable and refreshing non-alcoholic lager with fantastic carbonation. It contains just 25 calories per 100ml — on par with the Erdinger.

Not as widely available as the Erdinger, Bavaria can be found at larger supermarket chains in 330ml x 4 packs for just £2.

9

**Crisp and refreshing, just like the real thing**



www.bavaria.com

## Sainsbury's Czech, £1.20 (500ml)

Some of the best lagers in Europe are produced in the Czech Republic, so Sainsbury's Czech low-alcohol was a no-brainer when it came to filling our shopping basket.

From the outset it was apparent that the Czech was keen to be imbibed. Cracking the cap off, the exuberance of the aeration was such that half of the bottle found its way onto the living room carpet — and that's after resting in the fridge overnight. Unfortunately, its flavours weren't half as feisty as its froth. It was a little bit like drinking water, tainted water — dish water, if you will. We were unable to pinpoint any discernible tastes even after sipping the entire bottle. On the plus side, this brew, which registers just 0.5 per cent on the alcohol scale, comprises a paltry 16 calories per 500ml bottle — the lowest on test. But to end on a low note, Sainsbury's Czech is only available, of course, in Sainsbury's.

6

**Low in calories but devoid of flavour**



www.sainsburys.co.uk

## VERDICT

Our path to weight-loss and wellbeing, while still maintaining a solid level of drinking, has been a rocky one. But we swigged and we sipped and we gulped and we guzzled, and we pretty much plotted a course that should see us attain our goal.

Bottom of the class by a considerable margin is the Sainsbury's Czech. Although boasting the fewest calories per bottle it was a nondescript blend that largely left us cold. Fighting hard for the top-spot, the Erdinger's second place may belie its heft among the low-alcohol big hitters; indeed if this test featured 10 or more contenders, I dare say the German brew would still be competing among the top three.

The gold medal then goes to the Bavaria: the undisputed featherweight champion of the beer and lager world. Its flavours are peppery, it's low in calories, offers an energy boost, and is available in numerous outlets.





# Many happy returns, National Cycle Network

**Wendy Johnson's new book espouses the joys of getting away from it all in some of the most wild and beautiful parts of the UK, on routes suitable for all ages and abilities of cyclist**

**Words** Wendy Johnson **Photos** Sustrans & Callum Tomsett

**I**f you've ever cycled anywhere in the UK then you're almost certain to have encountered the National Cycle Network (NCN). It has grown to become more than 14,000 miles of walking and cycling paths spanning the country, from the toe of Cornwall to the Highlands of Scotland, and is one of our finest assets.

This year sees the NCN's 20th birthday, a landmark that its creators, the charity Sustrans, are rightly proud of and in celebration they are releasing the official new guidebook to the Network: *Sustrans' Traffic-Free Cycle Rides: 150 Great Days Out*.

Tyres pumped, waterproofs packed and with more maps than the British Library stuffed into my bar bag, I set off with the enviable task of riding them all, cherry-picking the finest rides worthy of making it onto the pages.

For me, it's the traffic-free parts of the Network that really shine so this was something of a dream mission. They're perfect for families or less confident cyclists and, though they make up only a third of the NCN's entire length, are easily the most popular and historically rich of all. In fact, as I rode I began to think a better name for the traffic-free paths might be the National Recycle Network, as so many of them led me along our country's intriguing disused transport routes. Railway lines that fell under the Beeching axe in the 1960s, canals that shuttled limestone, coal and iron, and tramways that traversed the old tin and copper mines of Cornwall have all been given a new purpose. Once alive with the sounds of passenger and freight trains, horses' hooves and bargemen, these routes now resonate with the sound of bike bells, walkers and wildlife... and it's pretty wonderful.

Around 3,000 miles of riding, a few ferry crossings, many train trips and an indecent quantity of fried breakfasts later I can honestly say that no two traffic-free rides are the same. Each one has unique appeal, whether it is



Elan Valley trail

bookended by lighthouses and palaces or leads across hidden landscapes unreachable by road. As far as the latter goes, the Drake's Trail in Devon just about summed it up, swiftly taking me from Plymouth into the dramatic western fringes of Dartmoor where it became a remote ride of astonishing views and viaducts, dodging semi-wild ponies along the way.

There were endless opportunities for quiet reflection and solitude, blissful moments when it was just me, my bike and the skylarks. But they balanced beautifully with bustling

city rides and popular family routes, from London's fine Royal Parks and Kent's lively seaside resorts to Birmingham's impressive canal network, the 'Venice of the Midlands'.

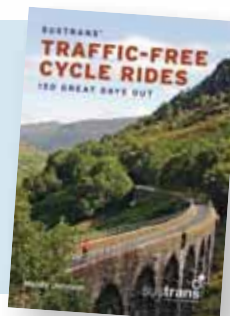
Then there were the one-off, never-to-be-forgotten experiences; the triumphant end to the Silkin Way as I crossed the world's first iron bridge, the satisfaction of completing a Cornish coast-to-coast ride in a morning's easy pedalling, and the six deeply atmospheric railway tunnels that make up the Monsal Trail through the Peak District.

Did I discover the very best of the best?

One traffic-free route to which all others should aspire? It's almost impossible to say, like asking a parent to choose a favourite child, but if pressed I'll readily admit that the Mawddach Trail in North Wales is near perfection. Give a bike to even the most ardent of non-cyclists and wave them off on this scenic, easy nine-miler against the backdrop of Snowdonia, then watch as they surrender utterly, unquestioningly and irreversibly to the joys of traffic-free riding.

## Support your National Cycle Network

*Sustrans' Traffic-Free Cycle Rides: 150 Great Days Out* by Wendy Johnson includes rides from across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, from all-time favourites like the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, to new routes like the Two Tunnels Greenway in Bath and part of the Great Glen in Scotland. It is available from [sustrans.org.uk/shop](http://sustrans.org.uk/shop) priced £15.99, with 100 per cent of the profits going towards supporting Sustrans' work across the UK.



# Sustrans's top 20 routes

## 1 Aire Valley Towpath

Yorkshire

16 miles

**Start:** Granary Wharf, Leeds

**Finish:** Five Rise Locks, Bingley

**NCN route numbers:** 66 and 696

**Train stations:** Leeds, and Bingley

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Tarmac path, stony trail and fine gravel track, with some road crossings and a short on-road section.

**Route description:** Lovely locks feature all the way along this 16-mile stretch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal but the best are saved to last — Bingley Five Rise Locks.

**Eat and drink:** In Leeds, Laynes Espresso and the Greedy Pig are popular spots, plus there are waterside cafes and restaurants at the route's start in Granary Wharf.



Some Yorkshire Aire

## 2 Comber Greenway

County Antrim & Down

7 miles

**Start:** Titanic Belfast

**Finish:** Comber town square

**NCN route number:** 99

**Train station:** Belfast Central

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Flat tarmac path with some road crossings and on-road sections at Belfast and Comber.

**Route description:** This tranquil green corridor leads from the industrial heart of Belfast into the rolling countryside of County Down, passing some of Northern Ireland's most impressive and historic landmarks along the way.

**Eat and drink:** The Crown, owned by the National Trust, is Belfast's most famous pub and definitely worth a visit before setting off.



Irish charm

## 3 Edinburgh to Bo'ness

Lothian

17 miles

**Start:** Haymarket train station, Edinburgh

**Finish:** Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway Museum, Bo'ness

**NCN route number:** 1 and 76

**Train stations:** Edinburgh Haymarket, Dalmeny, North Queensferry and Linlithgow



## Route locator

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Mostly flat on tarmac path and unsealed path. Some road crossings and short on-road sections.

**Route description:** This wonderful ride from Scotland's capital follows the Firth of Forth to the historic town of Bo'ness, passing the impressive Forth bridges along the way. Edinburgh is one of the UK's finest cities and well worth exploring before setting off. The castle, Royal Mile and labyrinth of cobbled lanes through the Old Town are particularly attractive.

**Eat and drink:** Edinburgh is full of great places, seek out the cycle cafe at Ronde Bicycle Outfitters in Stockbridge.



Go forth from Edinburgh

## 4 Elan Valley Trail

Powys

8.5 miles

**Start:** Cwmduddwr

**Finish:** Pen y Garreg Reservoir

**NCN route numbers:** 8 and 81

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Gently climbing along tarmac path and stony trail with several gates and small roads to cross.

**Route description:** This ride through the heart of Wales takes in the rugged beauty of the Cambrian Mountains and the placid waters of four Elan Valley reservoirs. Along the way, keep a look out overhead for the distinctive forked tail and gliding flight of red kites.

**Eat and drink:** The Triangle Inn is a 16th century Drovers' Inn just moments from the start of the trail or along the route call in at the cafe at Elan Valley Visitor.

## 5 Glasgow to Loch Lomond

Strathclyde

20 miles

**Start:** Bell's Bridge, Glasgow

**Finish:** Balloch village, Loch Lomond

**NCN route number:** 7 and 754

**Train stations:** Exhibition Centre or Balloch

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Tarmac path with some road crossings and on-road sections at Clydebank,



Dumbarton, Renton and Balloch.

**Route description:** This incredibly varied ride leads from the handsome city of Glasgow along the banks of the River Clyde, the Forth and Clyde Canal and a former railway path to the village of Balloch, near the sublime shores of Loch Lomond.

**Eat and drink:** Glasgow has many places to eat, try Clydebuilt Bar and Kitchen in the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, or Riverside Cafe at Riverside Museum. The Balloch House country pub is at the route's end in Balloch.

## 6 The Granite Way

Devon

8.5 miles

**Start:** Lydford Castle

**Finish:** Okehampton Station

**NCN route number:** 27

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Tarmac path with a short and quiet on-road section.

**Route description:** Some of England's most dramatic and ancient landscapes feature on this ride across the north-western edge of Dartmoor National Park, unrivalled for wild and rugged beauty. The scenery is remarkable throughout, but never more so than from the windswept centres of the two viaducts mid-route.

**Eat and drink:** The National Trust has two tearooms at Lydford Gorge, while the Castle Inn is right beside the route's start at Lydford.



Dramatic  
Devon

## 7 High Peak Trail

Derbyshire

11.5 miles

**Start:** Middleton Top Visitor Centre

**Finish:** Cycle Hire Centre, Parsley Hay

**NCN route number:** 54

**Train station:** Cromford is nearest to the route's start.

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Flat, dust surface trail with some road crossings and gates.

**Route description:** The views across the Peak District's craggy limestone landscape are simply staggering on this exposed, top-of-the-world ride along part of the Pennine Bridleway.

**Eat and drink:** The National Stone Centre cafe at Wirksworth and the Rising Sun pub at Middleton are both near to the start; along the way, try the characterful Ye Olde Gate Inn at Brassington.

## 8 Lancaster Canal

Lancashire

8 miles

**Start:** Lancaster Millennium Bridge

**Finish:** Carnforth station

**NCN route number:** 6

**Train stations:** Lancaster and Carnforth

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Flat tarmac path with some road crossings and short, quiet on-road sections.

**Route description:**

The still and gentle waters of the Lancaster Canal on this towpath route are a wonderful

contrast to the fast moving tides of Morecambe Bay and mountainous landscape of the Lake District, which are part of the far-reaching views along the way.

**Eat and drink:** Lancaster is full of places to eat and drink. Try the Water Witch pub on the canal banks before the start of the route.

## 9 Mawddach Trail

Gwynedd

9.5 miles

**Start:** Barmouth

**Finish:** Marian Mawr car park, Dolgellau

**NCN route number:** 8

**Train stations:** Barmouth and Morfa Mawddach

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Flat, wide promenade, tarmac path, gravel track with some road crossings and short on-road sections.

**Route description:** Possibly the finest and most memorable traffic-free trail of all, this is nine miles of perfection along the heavenly Mawddach estuary in North Wales.

**Eat and drink:** Barmouth favourites include Bath House Cafe on the seafront, the Last Inn overlooking the water or the Harbour fish and chip shop.



Barmouth  
by bike

## 10 Nene Park Loop

Northamptonshire

6.5 miles

**Start and finish:** Viersen Platz, Peterborough

**NCN route numbers:** 53 and 63

**Train station:** Peterborough

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain, gradients and access:** Flat tarmac path and unsealed path.

**Route description:** Unhurried, carefree cycling is the best way to experience the serene Nene Valley. This gentle ride takes in the atmospheric wetlands west of Peterborough and the exceptional Nene Park.

**Eat and drink:** In Ferry Meadows Country Park, Lakeside Kitchen and Bar is beside Gunwade Lake, while Ferry Meadows Cafe overlooks Overton Lake.

## 11 Nidderdale Greenway

Yorkshire

3 miles

**Start:** The Gardeners Arms, Bilton

**Finish:** Ripley Castle

**NCN route number:** 67

**Train stations:** Starbeck and Harrogate

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Tarmac path, largely flat with a very short on-road section.

**Route description:** The North Yorkshire countryside on this short and gentle ride is golden with wheat fields in the summer and ablaze with the amber leaves of the surrounding ancient woodland in autumn.

**Eat and drink:** The bustling Betty's Tea Room Cafe overlooking the Stray in Harrogate is worthy of its renown. Try the Gardeners Arms pub at Bilton where the route starts.



Yorkshire  
Greenway

## 12 Red Squirrel Trail

Isle of Wight

15 miles

**Start:** Sandown Pier

**Finish:** High Street, Cowes

**NCN route number:** 23

**Train stations:** Sandown and Ryde. Reach the Isle of Wight by ferry from Portsmouth

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Tarmac path and stony trail, with road crossings and short on-road sections.

**Route description:** Nicknamed 'Britain in miniature', the Isle of Wight has the most superb coast to coast route in miniature too. Rolling hillsides, wisteria-covered tearooms, thatched cottages and traditional pubs are all quintessentially British, but the golden beaches, sapphire seas and balmy summer climate are akin to the Mediterranean.

**Eat and drink:** Try the Beach Cafe in Sandown at the start.



IoW: Little  
Britain

## 13 Silkin Way

Shropshire

7 miles

**Start:** Telford Cycle Centre

**Finish:** Ironbridge

**NCN route numbers:** 55 and 45

**Train station:** Telford Central

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Tarmac path, fine gravel track and stony trail with some road crossings and quiet, on-road sections.

**Route description:** Ironbridge's status as the birthplace of the industrial revolution doesn't do justice to the tremendous natural beauty that this World Heritage Site also offers. This gentle ride through Ironbridge Gorge takes in Shropshire's industrial past and scenic present.

**Eat and drink:** Ironbridge has many eateries; popular places include Darby's cafe, Eley's of Ironbridge pork pies, the White Hart, the Swan and the Malthouse.

## 14 Souter Lighthouse to St Mary's Lighthouse

Tyne & Wear

10.5 miles

**Start:** Souter Lighthouse

**Finish:** St Mary's Lighthouse

**NCN route number:** 1

**Train stations:** Newcastle or Sunderland

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Tarmac path and concrete promenade.

**Route description:** Two fine lighthouses keeping a dignified watch over the North Sea bookend this ride along the North and South Tyneside coasts. It takes in spectacular seabird colonies and golden bays, and has the added pleasure of a ferry trip midway.

**Eat and drink:** Highlights include Happy Organic cafe in Cleaton, the restaurants at Fish Quay in North Shields, and the exceptional Colmans fish and chip shop in South Shields.



The dignified Souter

## 15 The Strawberry Line

Somerset

11 miles

**Start:** Yatton train station

**Finish:** Cheddar Gorge

**NCN route number:** 26

**Train station:** Yatton

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Fine gravel track and stony trail with short, quiet on-road sections.

**Route description:** The landscape transforms spectacularly on this ride into the Mendip Hills, starting in the low-lying land of the North Somerset Levels and ending beneath the dramatic vertical cliffs of Britain's biggest limestone gorge. Start at Yatton train station and immediately enter Cheddar Valley local nature reserve.

**Eat and drink:** Try Strawberry Line Cafe at Yatton station or the Thatchers Cider Shop in Sandford.



A scrumptious journey

## 16 South Tyne Trail

Northumberland

5.5 miles

**Start:** Haltwhistle

**Finish:** Lambley Viaduct

**NCN route number:** 68

**Train station:** Haltwhistle

**Grade:** Easy/Moderate

**Terrain:** Tarmac path and fine gravel track with some road crossings, a very short on-road section at Haltwhistle, and a much longer on-road section at Lambley.

**Route description:** Starting in the heart of Hadrian's Wall country, this route weaves across

the stunningly scenic South Tyne Valley in Northumberland through some of the most remote and unspoilt landscape in England.

**Eat and drink:** In Haltwhistle, try Kasteale Organic Cafe, La Toot Cafe and the Black Bull pub.

## 17 Taff Trail South

Glamorgan

28.5 miles

**Start:** Merthyr Tydfil train station

**Finish:** Millennium Centre, Cardiff Bay

**NCN route number:** 8

**Train station:** Merthyr Tydfil, Cardiff Central and Cardiff Bay

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Tarmac path and stony trail, with some road crossings and on-road sections at Pontypridd, Tongwynlais and Cardiff Bay.

**Route description:** This descent through the Taff Valley sees the landscape evolve from rugged, rounded hillsides around former mining villages in the Heads of the Valleys to the sleek buildings of Wales's capital city Cardiff and its vibrant bay.

**Eat and drink:** Try the Woodland Cafe at BikePark Wales, Merthyr Tydfil. Cardiff Bay is packed with cafes and restaurants.



Rugged Taff

## 18 Tudor Trail

Kent

5.5 miles

**Start:** Tonbridge Swimming Pool car park

**Finish:** Penshurst Place and Gardens

**NCN route number:** 12

**Train stations:** Tonbridge and Penshurst

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Tarmac and concrete path, fine gravel track and stony trail with a short and quiet on-road section.

**Route description:** This ride through charming countryside into the Weald of Kent is wonderful throughout, but it's the majestic view of Penshurst Place and Gardens in the final mile that makes it distinctly memorable.

**Eat and drink:** Tonbridge has many places to eat, including the popular Finch House Cafe. Porcupine Pantry and Garden Restaurant are at Penshurst Place.



The charming Weald

## 19 Viking Coastal Trail

Kent

9 miles

**Start:** Reculver Country Park visitor centre

**Finish:** Turner Contemporary art gallery, Margate

**NCN route number:** 15

**Train station:** Margate

**Grade:** Easy

**Terrain:** Shared-use concrete promenade and a short on-road section from Eppe Bay to Westgate-on-Sea. During peak season cyclists are required to dismount on the promenade.

**Route description:** An endless expanse of turquoise sea stretches beside this glorious route along the wild and chalky Thanet coast, where Vikings first landed in Britain.

**Eat and drink:** At the start, try Reculver Country Park cafe, King Ethelbert Inn or Little Winkles seafood kiosk. The Ambrette Restaurant and Greedy Cow Deli in Margate's Old Town are both popular.



The prom season

## 20 Wirral Way

Merseyside

12 miles

**Start:** Wirral Country Park

**Finish:** Hooton train station

**NCN route numbers:** 89 and 56

**Train stations:** West Kirby and Hooton

**Grade:** Moderate

**Terrain:** Fine gravel track with some road crossings and short on-road sections.

**Route description:** The enduring beauty of the untamed and ever-changing Dee Estuary is a spectacular backdrop for this ride along the 12-mile Wirral Country Park, Britain's first ever country park.

**Eat and drink:** Aubergine Cafe in West Kirby is popular, or visit Eureka Cyclists' Cafe at Two Mills just a few miles from Hooton.



Dee is for delightful

Get involved in one of the hundreds of guided rides this summer as part of the National Cycle Network's 20th celebrations. Visit [sustrans.org.uk/events](http://sustrans.org.uk/events) to find a ride or event near you. Or show your support for the Network by sponsoring a mile at [sustrans.org.uk/mymile](http://sustrans.org.uk/mymile).



# Seawheelin'

**Hastings and Eastbourne are linked by a cycle path, and three renowned galleries. Max Glaskin puts you in the frame about a picturesque route**

Words Maximum Glaskin Photos Chris Catchpole



**T**he Sussex coast is as pretty as a picture and its coastal cycle route is as easy as painting by numbers. The two big problems are choosing which of its three world-class art galleries to visit and how to keep pedalling past so many distracting pubs, cafes and tea shops. These were challenges we volunteered to suffer on your behalf, dear reader, and we were rewarded with a masterpiece of a ride.

Throwing caution to the wind, we chose to go from east to west, against the direction of the prevailing wind. OK, there was not even a breeze that day but it was about the biggest risk we could think of for such a soft outing. We risked nothing by stocking up with sandwiches at Judges bakery in

Hastings High Street, to eat at a picnic bench on the stony beach but we did have to guard them jealously from the gulls that think they are pterodactyls.

Nearby is the Stade, home to the town's fleet of beach-launched fishing boasts and atmospheric net huts. Since March 2012 these have been joined by the award-winning Jerwood Gallery, which houses a collection of and exhibits contemporary British art. Crucially, it's got a tea shop next door and a seafood bar, restaurant and ice parlour opposite. And, lest I forget, there is a pub just along a bit. Nearby is George Street, which has so many cafes rumour says it's built on cake and staffed entirely by gingerbread men.





# HEADS UP

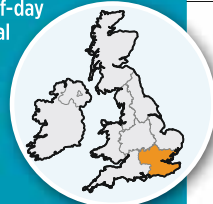
An easy seaside half-day ride along a National Cycle Route but beware variable surfaces and short, sharp climbs

**Distance:** 17 miles (27 km)

**Big hills:** 0

**Challenge:** ★★☆☆☆

**Cafe stops:** Infinite



17  
miles

## Smelly

Avoiding temptation we took to the beachside cycle path shared with pedestrians and headed west. All went smoothly until the path moved from the sea's edge to run between beach huts (like a bike shed but for humans). The ground went gravelly and the air went smelly, the kind of odour cowherds say is good for you.

We soon cleared the pong but the ground got dicier — not much better than clinker kept in place by a mesh as we rode next to the railway at Bulverhythe. OK, not every mile of Sustrans's National Cycle Network can be velodrome perfect but this stretch was a little unnerving on small, skinny wheels.

By now the dazzling afternoon sun

**Above:** Much of the route between Hastings and Eastbourne follows the shoreline, such as this stretch at the west end of Bulverhythe  
**Above right:** The Jerwood gallery, on The Stade, Hastings. The architecture blends with the old huts that house the nets of the beach fishing fleet, reputedly the largest of its kind in Europe

was interfering with reality, so you'll forgive us for gawping at a path-side metalwork sculpture of people because one of the figures has a bicycle! How many 3D artworks of cyclists are there in Britain? If we can have statues of generals on horseback and poets running for trains, shouldn't Damien Hirst be commissioned to slice a cyclist vertically in a tank of formaldehyde or Tracy Emin showing all the punctures she's never patched?

## Glorious

A short, sharp climb eventually gave its reward — a giddy descent to the seafront at Bexhill on Sea, a quintessentially British and old-fashioned resort that is still coming to terms with the invention of the 'boneshaker'. The wide promenade hosts a building of pure delight. No, not the ice cream kiosk, although that has its charms, but the Modernist and glorious De La Warr Pavilion. Inside are two galleries, an auditorium, cafe and bar. Outside are belvederes, lawns, playtime fountains, balconies with sea views and a flat roof for even more exhibitions. It is worth parking up and taking time to stroll into this 80-year-

old architectural beauty.

Unfortunately this is almost the end of the littoral part of the route, literally. Soon after the De La Warr the path leaves the beach and is hustled inland to run along roads of mansions that monopolise the sea views for themselves. We were tempted to quit at Cooden Beach station and take the train but the road looked narrow and quiet so we carried on. Only when it stayed narrow, got busy and the 30mph speed limit was inexplicably lifted, did we regret our choice.

This coastal strip of the Pevensey Levels is flat enough and there are enough gaps in the hedges to see the favourite landing points of Continental invaders, from Julius Caesar to William the Conqueror. My mind wandered as lonely as a cloud along NCN2 until a creative urge prompted us to head south over the level crossing at Normans Bay station (which William could've used to reach London in 90 minutes — if he'd waited on platform one for 800 years).

## Dazed

We clung as close to the coast as possible and can't honestly say the





## STOP!



### PUBS

**The Star Inn**, Normans Bay, Pevensey  
Tel 01323 762648  
[www.thestarinnnormansbay.co.uk](http://www.thestarinnnormansbay.co.uk)  
Open daily from 11am  
Food, real ale, river, ducks — what's not to like?

### CAFES

**Urban Ground**, Towner, Devonshire Park, College Road, Eastbourne BN21 4JJ Tel: 01323 434670  
[www.urbanground.co.uk](http://www.urbanground.co.uk)  
Open Tuesday to Sunday 10am–5.30pm  
Coffee in cups, cakes on plates, art on walls, scenery through windows

### RESTAURANT

**Webbe's**, 1 Rock-a-Nore Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3DW  
Tel: 01424 721650  
[www.webbesrestaurants.co.uk](http://www.webbesrestaurants.co.uk)  
Open daily (but check for seasonal closings)  
Fish cooked brilliantly and direct from the fishing fleet across the road

### BIKE SHOPS

**Bells Bicycles**, 4 George St, Hastings Old Town TN34 3EG Tel: 01424 716541  
[www.bellsbicycles.co.uk](http://www.bellsbicycles.co.uk) Open Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm  
**Bexhill Bicycle Hire & Repairs**, 33a Marina TN40 1BP Tel 01424 272088  
[www.bexhillbicycle.com](http://www.bexhillbicycle.com)  
Open Fri–Sun 10am–6pm  
**Let's Bike**, 255 Southbourne Road BN22 8RE Tel: 07875 591648  
[www.letsbike-eastbourne.co.uk](http://www.letsbike-eastbourne.co.uk)  
Open Thurs–Tues 9.15am–7pm

### WACKY THING

**West Hill Lift, Hastings** — the country's steepest funicular railway, marginally faster than cycling up a very steep hill

### TRAIN

Hastings, Bexhill and Eastbourne have regular services from London Victoria, Brighton and Ashford

3  
galleries

**“Eastbourne has yet to accept that bikes are a valid form of transport”**



Making tracks: there is no waiting on a bike



Modernist man: the De La Warr Pavilion

mix of caravans and chalets would've impressed a connoisseur. It got even less picturesque joining the A259 at Pevensey Bay. The constant traffic dazed me and we missed a turning which left us floundering amid traffic as if choreographed by Hieronymus Bosch. Quieter side roads evolved into monstrous cul-de-sacs. Road signs morphed into gobbledegook. Cycle paths got gritty and grimy. Roundabouts were devilish carousels.

Seeking a Turneresque seascape, we grasped at a sign for Langley Point and it turned out to be on NCN21. Yet, within metres, the route threw us back into motorists' heaven. These outskirts of Eastbourne seem determined to stop cyclists getting to the centre with clean lungs and intact limbs.

In fact, the whole town has yet to

accept that a bicycle is a valid form of transport and worth encouraging. West of the pier it's only possible to share the wide road with a large number of vehicles. There's plenty of room and the council has little excuse for not including a protected cycle lane.

Elsewhere signage for the Towner — the third excellent gallery along the route — is ludicrously poor. It exhibits scintillating contemporary art of international quality but don't expect to see frequent helpful fingerposts directing you to its door. We just kept going along the front, the sun glinting off the bonnets of cars parked between us and the beach, towards Devonshire Park. Once there, we rested, swallowed an entire bottle of water, erected our easels, mixed our oil colours and knocked out a couple of classic portraits. I wish.

**End**





## ROAD BOOK

Follow NCN2 with the sea on your left. Stick to it closely, while taking care of pedestrians who also share much of it. Beware of cars in the lanes from Cooden Beach westwards and try to live peacefully with the buses and traffic that fill the roads from Pevensey Bay into Eastbourne. If you see any signs for NCN21 take them but don't have high hopes of being guided by them. Signs are missing so head for the seafront and Devonshire Park.



Our writer passes some 'bike sheds for humans'



# High roller

Climbing Great Dun Fell, the highest road in Britain, may not be as laborious as traversing the alpine fare on offer at the Grand Tours but, as *Roo Fowler* finds out, it's no walk in the park either

Words and Photos Roo Fowler

**A**re you the kind of cyclist who hates hills or who loves them? I have to admit, I'm the latter. I'd far rather be riding up a hill or down a hill than cruising along flat ground, and for me the bigger the hill the better. A long uphill gives you time to find and settle into a rhythm, then enjoy the climb in the knowledge that every pedal stroke taking you up is going to translate into a longer freewheel once on the downhill. Watching the hour plus climbs in the Alps and Pyrenees during the Tour de France sometimes seems a bit distant when my local climbs might max out at under 10 minutes, so I pondered, what is actually the highest road in the UK? It's

probably in the Scottish Highlands, I thought. Well, I was wrong. A quick Google session revealed that it's actually a little further south, near Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria: Great Dun Fell. Better still, it's actually a private dead-end road that doubles as a public bridleway, so it sounded like there would be very little traffic, if any. Topping out at 848m it still can't compare with the climbs triple its height in the Alps but, nonetheless, I had to see what it was like.

## Gentle start

My friend Greg and I somehow got lucky and as we set off from Appleby station the sun joined us on the ride.





# HEADS UP

A gentle loop taking in the not-so-gentle climb and descent of Great Dun Fell about two thirds of the way around, all on quiet lanes.



**Distance:** 25 miles

**Big hills:** 1

**Challenge:** ★★★★★

**Cafe stops:** None



All out of steam

## 25 miles

and curved to the right, it kicked up; it seemed this was not going to be a climb of consistent gradient or great character. The kick comprised a long straight that only goes up. Up and around a corner we reached a cattle grid, and with it the threshold of where the fields ended and the moorland began. It also saw the start of a rarity for English climbs: snow poles. The first one had a number on, 337, the next 336. It seemed we were going to have a slow and possibly painful countdown until the summit over 3km away. We passed a derelict stone-built structure — evidence of this area's mining past — and continued up below the curiously named Knock Old Man. The road traversed the hillside with some fantastic views behind, and for a couple of seconds we found ourselves freewheeling, as the road dipped towards the narrowing valley we'd been riding up. But uphill gradients made a return as we lurched out of the saddle to climb up past steep slopes of scree.

The crossing of Knock Ore Gill offered a brief respite before another ramp up on a road so narrow it felt like a cycle path. We lost sight of our golf ball; we pictured it to be around the corner but the relentless snow poles with their static indifference informed us that we still had another 130 to cycle past. The road flattened slightly as we left the Gill behind and it felt like the climb was already over, a gate across the road stopped any traffic from reaching the radar station (we had seen two cars) ▶

**Main pic:** The desolate beauty of the UK's highest road  
**Top right:** Leaving 'the Shire' for the 'Lonely Mountain'  
**Left:** There are remnants of Cumbria's industrial past en route



The only way is up

From the station it's a short climb up and out of the town, and in no time we were on roads lined by thick spring grass and cow parsley. We turned alongside Hilton Beck with the ominous bank of the Pennines looming in the distance. Nearer to our wheels the surrounding landscape was impossibly pretty, the natural folds of the hills lined with stone walls containing ancient trees and that bright green grass was somewhere between a manicured golf course and a Hobbit village. Between the small villages of Hilton and Murton the local population were all out, chatting on the quiet road and we got a wave from a couple sat enjoying the sun in their front gardens. Traffic was

virtually non-existent as we rode parallel to the fells on gently undulating roads. Reaching Dufton we stopped at the village stores for a quick snack and drink. Sat outside, the white golf ball-like dome marking the summit of Great Dun Fell can be seen high above the rows of cottages; it seemed disconcertingly far away, and shrouded in shadow while we sat in the sun. That golf ball was our target, just like the observatory atop Mont Ventoux in France: it marked the end of the uphill.

Back on the bikes we quickly reached Knock, where we took a right and the 8km uphill began. As ever, the start was gentle for a kilometre or so, but after we passed a few farm buildings



## STOP!



### PUBS

**The Stag Inn**, Dufton, Appleby  
Cumbria CA16 6DB  
Tel: 01768 351608  
[www.thestagdufton.co.uk](http://www.thestagdufton.co.uk)

### CAFES

**Post Box Pantry**, Dufton, Appleby  
Cumbria, CA16 6DN  
Open: Daily 10:30am-5pm  
[www.postboxpantry.co.uk](http://www.postboxpantry.co.uk)

### BIKE SHOPS

There are no bike shops in Appleby;  
Penrith is your best bet. Try **Arragon's**  
2 Brunswick Road, Penrith  
Cumbria CA11 7LU Tel: 01768 890344  
[www.arragons.com](http://www.arragons.com)

**“High above us the summit seemed impossibly far away, shrouded in shadow”**

and the road changed character. More of a twisting flowing moorland affair, it arced around until we saw the white ball within spitting distance. The poles finally ran out and as we passed number one we rolled to a stop and admired the view out to the west. It's a view that wouldn't look out of place from an aeroplane window as we looked down into Cumbria, thousands of feet below. It had taken 45 minutes to reach there from when things started pointing up — a long time to be fighting gravity.

### Reward

They say 'what goes up, must come down' and although I've been on plenty of rides where that does not seem to be the case, there's no denying that in this instance it was true as we retraced our steps and reaped the rewards of the past 45 minutes. Wind noise pummelled our ears as we instantly hit 30mph as we swooped around snow poles with images of slalom skiers in our minds.

Things that seemed so slow to pass on the way up were ticked off in an instant: this is where we joined the Gill; this is where we crossed it, past the scree, up the tiny incline with barely a pedal stroke and back up to speed, past the stone structure... pole 337 vanished as we buzzed over the cattle grid. The long straight now seemed much shorter and

**Above:** A rare sight on a UK road — as many bikes as cars

**Below:** Our correspondents took the second half of the journey in one fell swoop

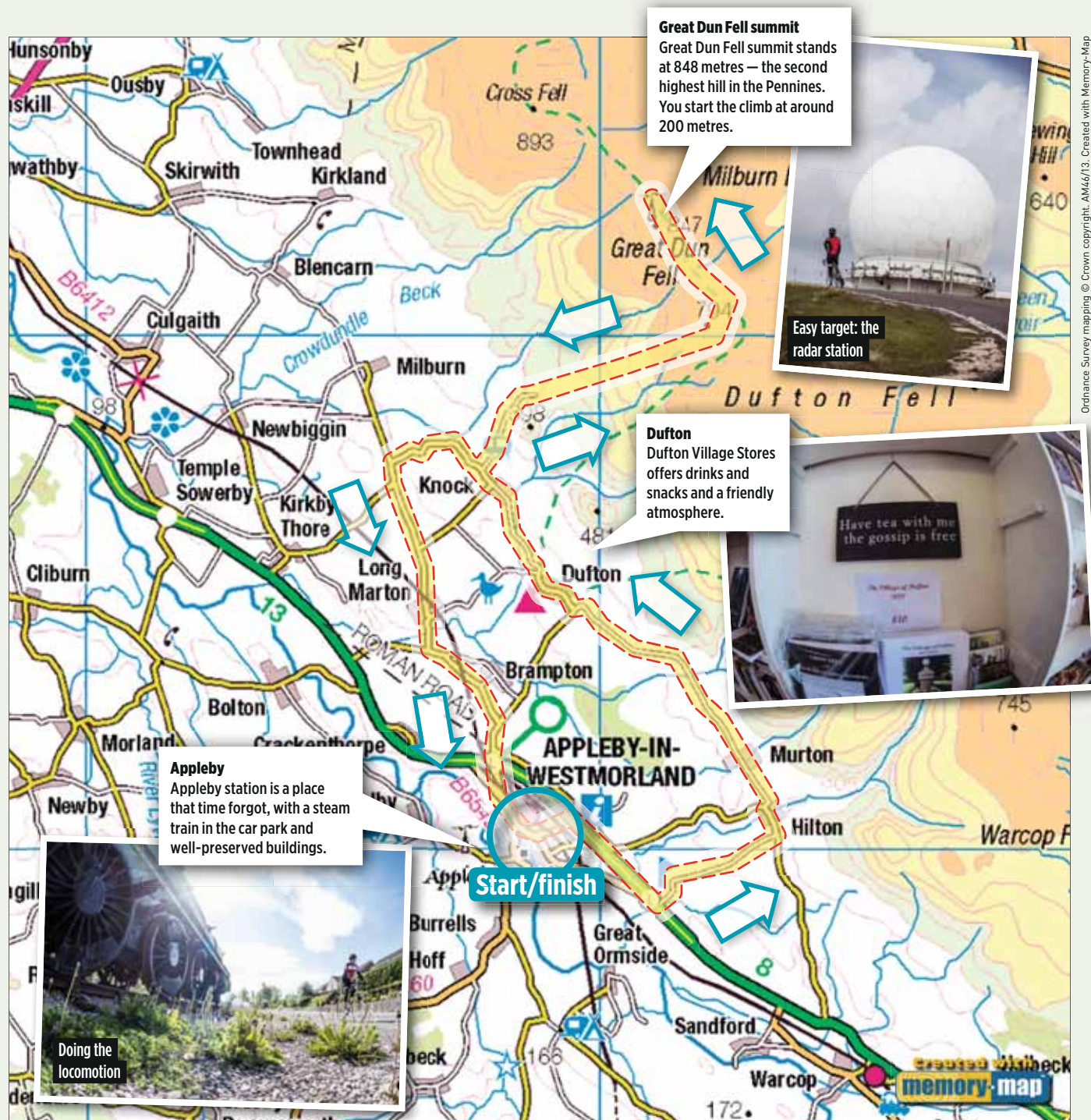


we hit the brakes as we negotiated the steep kick up past the farm buildings in reverse. And that was that. With streaming eyes we arrived back at the T-junction where we pulled off from Knock an hour earlier; 15 minutes reward for 45 minutes effort, that seemed fair, and looking back up at the radar dome, it's hard to believe we had just covered that ground in that space of time. Back onto flat roads and we noticed how tired we felt, that quarter hour blast of air stiffened us up after the exertion on the climb.

The 8km back to Appleby felt like a warm-down as we reflected on the experience of riding the UK's highest paved road. Does it compare to the Alps? I think so — from a quiet village, up through farmland and beyond into wild moorland, snow poles and Armco; it's definitely comparable and an experience I would recommend. **End**







## ROAD BOOK

Starting from Appleby station, take a right up the hill, take a right at the T-junction to stay on the south side of the A66 road above. At the next T-junction, turn left following the sign for Hilton and Murton, follow the road under the A66 as it bears to the right. You're on this road for about 3km before bearing left as you pass the sign for Murton, then another 7km to take you to a T-junction where you turn right following signs for Dufton and Knock. In the centre of Dufton keep an eye out on your left for the village shop if you're in need of refreshments. Continuing on a

couple of km you'll reach Knock, and after passing through this quiet village you will reach a junction on a corner, take the right and a couple of hundred metres later turn right into the road with a dead-end sign. This is the start of the climb! It's now a simple case of follow the road until you reach the distinctive Great Dun Fell radar station. On a windy day make sure you take extra clothing; there's not a lot of shelter. When — if — you reach the summit, enjoy the descent and on reaching the T-junction where the climb started, turn right. At the next T-junction, turn left following signs for Appleby and stay on this road for the next 6km. At the T-junction, turn right for Appleby and it's a straightforward ride back into the town.



Time for some blue sky thinking



# Take a ride on the wild side

Taking a slight sidestep off the well-beaten roads and trails of Snowdonia we find a real gem of a ride on 'the other side'

Words and photos Steve Thomas





# HEADS UP

A testing day out in the wilds of northern Wales

**Distance:** 23.4 miles  
**Big hills:** 3  
**Challenge:** ★★★★★  
**Cafe stops:** 2



**M**y neck was straining with the constant owl-like rotations it was making. I just couldn't stop gazing in awe at the wild and natural vistas that surrounded me, which were far removed from the traditional images of Snowdonia. This was a simply awe and ride-inspiring view.

Quite unexpectedly (or even predictably) the weatherman had got things working again, and boy how thankful I was. It was the tail end of that long overdue Indian summer, the one that spilled well into the depths of autumn, making for some of the best and warmest colours I've seen in years, if ever. Naturally it also made for some of the best riding conditions for some time too.

We'd been on the roll of a lifetime with the weather, and things had started to turn intermittently blustery, and so I'd pretty much given up on the idea of bagging more rides and images for the year. Standing around in wet shoes waiting for the odd glimpse of warm light? No thanks. A good old foot slog up Snowdon with the clouds swirling and the wind lashing my face had been on the menu — of course I had my bike

with me, just in case it did somehow turn out to be fine.

After downing a lunchtime oggie (a Welsh lamb pasty) in Betws y Coed the weather took a turn for the better, and I decided to hit the road, piecing together some wild back-roads to the east of town and the National Park, roads I hadn't been over for a decade or so. I knew these were truly wild and epic roads too.

Betws is known as the outdoors capital of Wales, and if it's outdoor gear and fancy coffee shops you're after then it surely is. There are possibly more new boots on the streets here over an average bank holiday afternoon than reach the summit of nearby Snowdon in a whole year. The real die-hards (or Dai-hards) tend to hang out in more moody and less touristic surroundings of the many nearby villages.

A sweet and rolling forest road takes the tradesman's exit from town, which is well away from the traffic. The sunlight

was sparkling through the patchy autumnal tree cover of the

Gwydyr Forest as I rolled out of town to a quite magical effect. But, although the riding is pleasing on the eye the grind soon begins, with a steep grass-centred beast of a climb over the bump towards Cwm Penmachno, a long and twisting valley lined with drystone-walls and flanked on both sides

by green forests and open mountains.

With the sun staring me directly in the face, the ride through the valley had a Seventies-like cinematic feel to it — I could almost imagine Butch and Sundance spinning by in the opposite direction. Before too long the valley's ►

**23.4**  
miles



Betws y Coed,  
the director's cut





Wending a path through unseen north Wales

## STOP!



### CAFES

Betws y Coed has more cafes per square metre than a beach has sand, something for most tastes can be found. Try this place for great deli-style food.

#### Alpine Coffee Shop

Station Approach  
Betws y Coed  
LL24 0AE  
Tel 01690 710747  
[www.alpinecoffeeshop.net](http://www.alpinecoffeeshop.net)  
Open 8.30am-5.30pm daily  
(8am during summer).

The best bakery in town is at the local Spar, great cakes and oggies.

**Tandderwen Bakery**, Holyhead Road,  
Betws y Coed,  
LL24 0AY  
Tel 01690 710324  
[www.sparbetwsycoed.co.uk](http://www.sparbetwsycoed.co.uk)  
Open 8am-10pm daily.

#### The Eagles, Penmachno, LL24 0UG

Tel 01690 7601z7  
[www.eaglespenmachno.co.uk](http://www.eaglespenmachno.co.uk)  
Bunkhouse plus B&B available too.  
Bar & restaurant opens 7pm daily, and from 2pm at weekends.

### BIKE SHOPS

**Beics Betws**, Hoel y Ficerdy,  
Betws y Coed, LL24 0AD  
Tel 01690 710766  
[www.bikewales.co.uk](http://www.bikewales.co.uk)  
(Behind the post office).

end comes into sight, which is where the Penmachno Mountain Bike trail is, and where the road takes a nasty left turn and clambers cruelly over the moors and into the forest above.

### Never a frown-

"Golden brown, texture like sun. Golden brown, finer temptress"—the Stranglers song runs through my head as I cruise blissfully through the sun-bleached moorland which may be barren and forbidding in mid-winter, but is as sweet as candy on a sunny day.

To each side there are crisp and golden-grey mountain-tops. The fact that you're almost level with them rewards you with the knowledge that you've actually conquered one heck of a climb.

Swinging back towards the north and the road meanders across the moors ahead, like that perfect ride dream road, before skimming its way across the side of the hills and dropping down through a green and tree-lined valley.

The traffic level is so low here that you might assume the road to be closed, which just goes to show what a difference it makes to turn in the opposite direction to the masses.

There's very little in the way of inhabitants



Dramatic scenery encompasses this wild ride



Keen gradients complete a well-rounded route

in this sneaky midriff of North Wales, making it a real treat to ride, even if you do have to pay your dues in sweat and crunching gears. It's worth every grind and grimace, tenfold.

Sometimes you wonder just how narrow surfaced roads can get, and the climb back out of the valley from unpronounceable Ysbyty Ifan is about as steep and narrow as it gets, although it is thankfully pretty short and offers head-on views of the Snowdon mountain range, or at least its eastern fringes.

Dropping back down to the main A5, it would be easy to brave the traffic and head left down the impressive valley back to town; but there is another treat lying in wait still — on the opposite side of this mainstream dragon of a road.

Another Snowdonia fringe road veers up before you, gently and then steeply winding up through remote grazing lands and on towards the small outpost of Capel Garmon. By the time you crest the climb the tree-line sinks slowly below you, and you're treated to yet another slanted view of the ring of mountains that encircle the peak of Snowdon. This view makes sense out of adding in that last sting in the tail of this dragon of a short ride.

From here it's all downhill back to Betws y Coed. A cuppa and Welsh cakes will be waiting, and they've been well and truly earned on this mini-epic of a ride. It's one that few outside visitors even think to tackle, which is why it's so special.

**End**

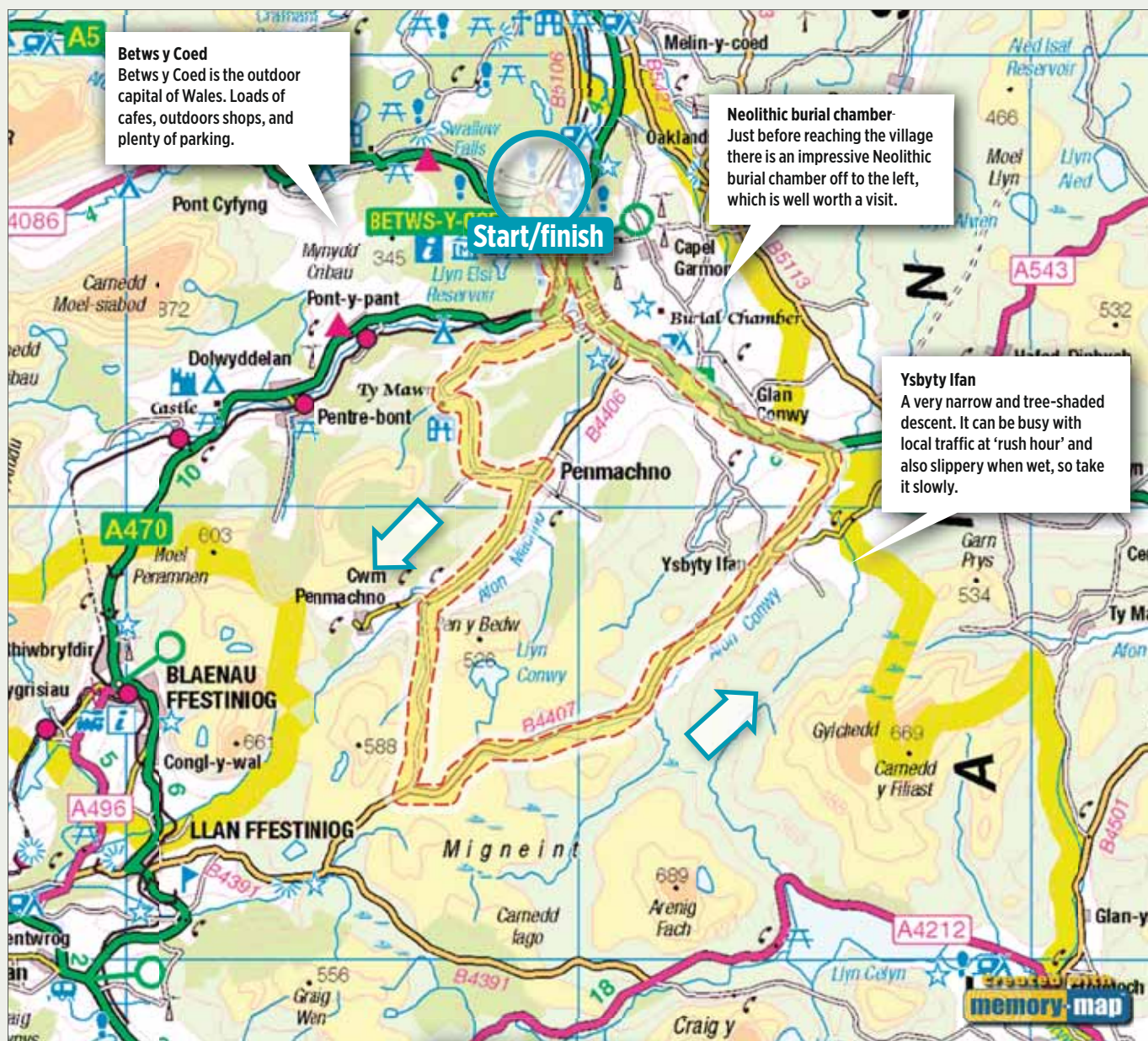


**Betws y Coed**  
Betws y Coed is the outdoor capital of Wales. Loads of cafes, outdoors shops, and plenty of parking.

**Neolithic burial chamber**  
Just before reaching the village there is an impressive Neolithic burial chamber off to the left, which is well worth a visit.

**Start/finish**

**Ysbyty Ifan**  
A very narrow and tree-shaded descent. It can be busy with local traffic at 'rush hour' and also slippery when wet, so take it slowly.



## ROAD BOOK

Starting from the small post office on the main road through Betws y Coed head east (direction Llangollen) for a few metres, and then take the small road to the right (behind the Cotswold outlet shop).

Follow the road through the forest and on to a junction with the A470. Turn right and then take the first left turn, and follow the narrow road over the hill and down to the B4406.

Turn right and continue through Penmachno. A few miles down the valley turn left onto the narrow road that you see climb up, and keep following it.

Over the top of the moors take the only left turn onto the B4407. As you descend into Ysbyty Ifan take the narrow left turn in the middle of the village. This skinny road climbs over the hill, and then descends (keeping right at all times) to meet the A5.

Go straight across and climb up to Capel Garmon, and then take the left turn on the far edge of the village. This road descends down to the A470, where you turn left for a few metres, and then right back into Betws y Coed.

**\*\* Be careful on this last descent.**



Cutting a two-wheeled swathe through the forests





# Just good Fens

Coasting along the uniquely flat, panoramic roads of rural Cambridgeshire

Words and photos Cath Harris

**T**here was a time when crossing the Fens was a treacherous ordeal. Those seeking to evade its murky swamps and marshes to reach the region's tiny island hamlets had to follow local fen-slodgers — guides who knew the firm but tussocky paths across the bogs. Such was the area's inaccessibility that, in 1070, it became the Anglo Saxons' last stronghold against Norman invaders.

Hereward the Wake defied the Conquest by hiding first in Ely Cathedral, then in the damp woodlands that Norman armies could not penetrate. This East Anglian expanse, straddling parts of Lincolnshire,

Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, has been transformed since those bloodthirsty days. The marshes are gone and instead a vast network of drainage channels controls winter floodwaters to protect farmland. Long, straight roads, rarely rising higher than two metres, offer easy cycling (subject to headwinds) between settlements with long histories. It's an eerie, thought-provoking landscape entirely shaped by man.

The rise and fall of tidal floodwaters from the Wash, which protected Hereward and helped form the Fens' nutritious peaty soil was eventually this unique region's undoing. England's rising population had to be fed, and in

**Top right: Much of the Fens is drained by man-made ditches**

the 17th century, speculators, encouraged by legislators, saw potential in draining the Fens so that their fertile base could be used for farming. Dutch engineer Cornelius Vermuyden was invited to build a network of waterways, sluices and dams to bleed the land, and did so with some success. As the peat dried, it contracted and shrank, however; much of the area is now below sea level, with pumps used to remove the water.

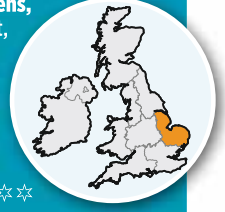
Ely is our starting point and the hub of one of four distinct areas in the Fens — the Peaty or Black Fens, characterised by rectangular fields and straight roads. From the station, we climb the small, 26m-high mound on



# HEADS UP

A ride across the Fens, a vast, mostly silent, engineered landscape

Distance: 44 miles  
Big hills: None  
Challenge: ★★☆☆☆  
Cafe stops: Two



which Ely was built — the highest land in the region — then skirt its ancient centre, riding alongside the overhanging jetties of old houses. Via a much newer housing estate, we reach the bypass that bounds the north-western edge of the city. Ahead is a panorama of huge fields and wide skies. Poppies, mallow and rosebay willowherb grow on earth banks between the road and drainage ditches. There are occasional pockets of hawthorn hedgerow, their ripening berries hinting at the autumnal glow they will soon attain. Brambles are plentiful but unripe too. Ely Cathedral is silhouetted against the sky.

**44 miles**

A series of turns, all at 90 degrees, sees us to the edge of Coveney, another island settlement built originally on a ridge of land above a bay. Small flocks of sparrows and goldfinches find sustenance alongside a Methodist church which overlooks farmland where wheat is being harvested. Sweetcorn and potatoes are among other local crops. Water from these fields is pumped to the nearby Hundred Foot Drain or New Bedford River (many drainage channels were given two names). This linear waterway was built between 1649 and 1652 during a second round of drainage overseen by Vermuyden. It runs for 21 miles north-east from Earith near Huntingdon to Denver near Downham Market and was originally 100ft wide, hence its name.

We cross the New Bedford River and, half a mile on, the Old Bedford River which lies parallel and is about 10 years older. It was completed in 1637 to take water from the Great Ouse river more directly to the North Sea. The inner banks of both the New

## “In the hedgerows ripening berries hint at autumn, while sparrows and goldfinches find sustenance”

and Old Bedford are lower so that floodwater can overflow onto the land between the rivers rather than onto the surrounding farmland. This narrow strip of ground is the Ouse Washes and has become important for thousands of water birds and myriad other wildlife.

### Legs and legumes

We scoot from the Washes alongside a husbandry farm, which we prefer not to investigate, then ride alongside Langwood Hill, which is entirely flat. We cross a wide drainage channel feeding the Old Bedford then sneak from the tarmac at an unmarked bridge, joining an easy grass track alongside Sixteen Foot Drain. This 12-mile channel was cut in 1651. It is not connected to the Washes.

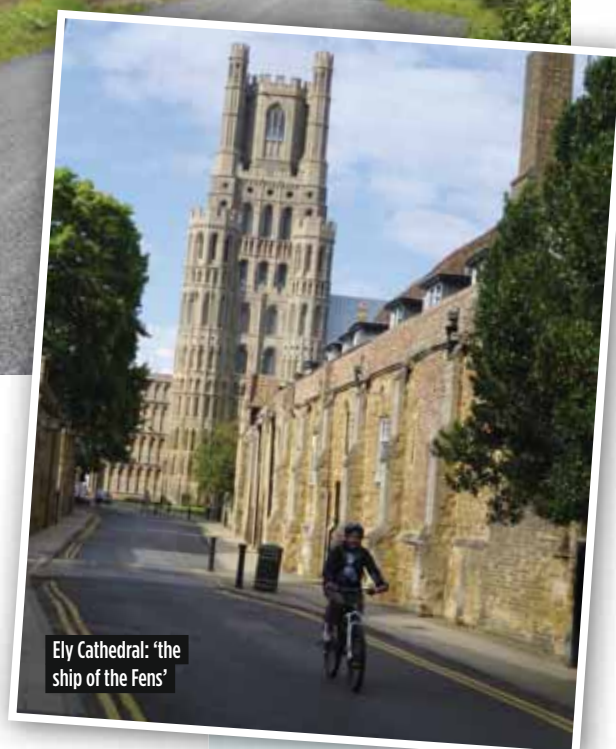
Another right-angled turn onto an unmade track is a fun break from road riding and easily navigable on a road bike. A sea of courgettes swamps Block Fen either side of us, and in the distance, busy turbines are making the most of the headwind. We nip into Wimblington for a break then on to March where St Wendreda's Church seems out on a limb. Its key is usually kept in a nearby pub but our luck is in and the door is open.

A corridor below the church tower, with thin windows through which lepers could see the altar, leads to the porch where gargoyles leer. A wealth of treasure is housed inside the church including a 600-year-old brass, a Norman font and a stunning wooden ceiling on which 118 angels are



Ancient routes are still useable by bike





## STOP!



### CAFES

**Cafe Skylark**, Skylark Garden Centre, Manea Road, Wimblington, March PE15 0PE. 01354 741212. [www.skylarkgardencentre.co.uk/cafe-skylark](http://www.skylarkgardencentre.co.uk/cafe-skylark)  
**Peacocks Tearoom**, 65 Waterside, Ely CB7 4AU. 01353 661100. [www.peacockstearoom.co.uk](http://www.peacockstearoom.co.uk)

### BIKE SHOP

**City Cycle Centre**, 7 Market St, Ely CB7 4PB. 01353 663131 [mail@citycyclecentre.com](mailto:mail@citycyclecentre.com)  
[www.citycyclecentre.com](http://www.citycyclecentre.com)

### PLACES OF INTEREST

**Ely Cathedral** – magnificent 12th century shrine. [www.elycathedral.org](http://www.elycathedral.org)  
**St Wendreda's Church** – stunning relics inside and out. [www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=4301](http://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=4301)  
**Ouse Washes** – a 21-mile band of grassland and nature reserves built to store floodwater.

mounted. Each is different and some carry musical instruments including a lute, a harp and a shawm, a medieval woodwind instrument with a shrill tone. Poet Sir John Betjeman is said to have described the ceiling as “worth cycling 40 miles into a headwind” to see. We haven’t ridden quite that far but the church is certainly worth a visit.

March itself is a pleasant enough town and once had Britain’s largest marshalling yard. Here, incoming

## “Chattering swallows swoop for insects to fuel their migration back to Africa”

freight trains were separated into individual carriages and allocated new trains according to their destination. The town has an elegant if slightly gaudy fountain which marks the coronation of King George V in 1911. We do not linger, looking forward instead to a tailwind back to Ely. We zig-zag back to the Sixteen Foot Drain where bright yellow water lilies break the monotony of this part of the ride.

Chattering swallows swoop on insects close to the water, fuelling up for their arduous migration back to Africa. As we approach Welney and the Old Bedford River again, a family of mistle thrushes noisily announces its presence on electricity wires. We pass signs for droves — unmade farm tracks — and one for a suspension bridge, which, alas, we never find.

Just before Littleport, we see the tower of Ely Cathedral poking the skyline and convince ourselves that it is nearer than it looks. The route back undulates through hamlets and we arrive more quickly than we expect. Tea and cake by the river or on lawns alongside the cathedral are a must, before taking a tour of Ely’s pretty streets and impressive ancient buildings. All that is left is an easy freewheel back to the station. **End**

**Top:** Ely rises up proudly on the horizon in this flattest of lands

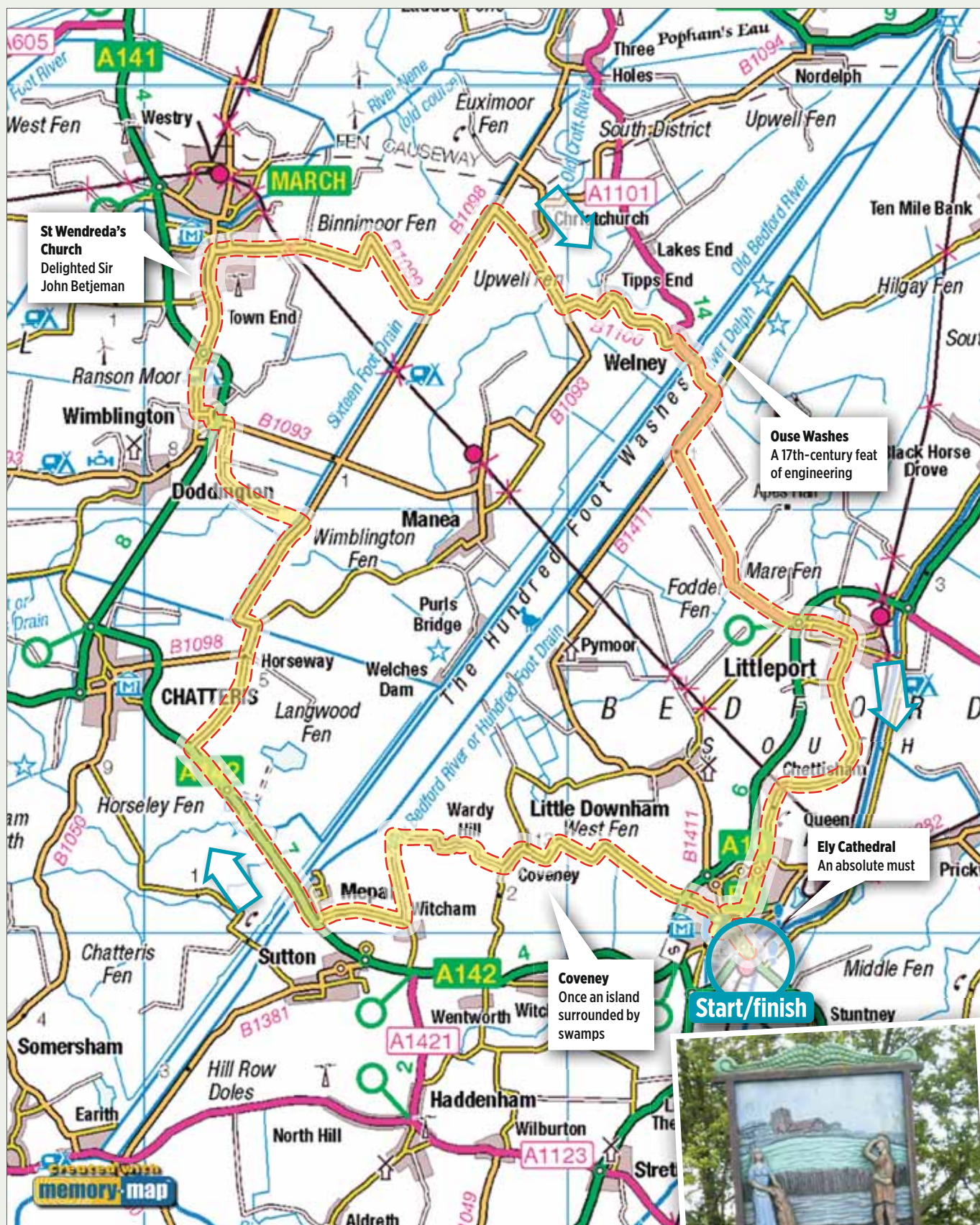
## Ely

The cathedral — ‘the ship of the Fens’ — dominates the city and its surroundings. Ely grew first around a seventh century monastery on the same site, then around its cathedral, work on which began in the 11th century. The monastery was founded in 673 by Etheldreda, estranged Queen of Northumbria. A shrine to her was destroyed during the dissolution.

The cathedral has been restored several times, including the £8m Great Restoration, completed in 2000.

The nave is as long as Ely High Street. The Octagon Tower, which resembles a lantern, is almost 40m above the nave. Oliver Cromwell is Ely’s most famous former resident. He was tax collector there from 1638 to 1646. Fishing and wild-fowling were common livelihoods before the Fens were drained. Eels were among fish caught and may have given the city its name.

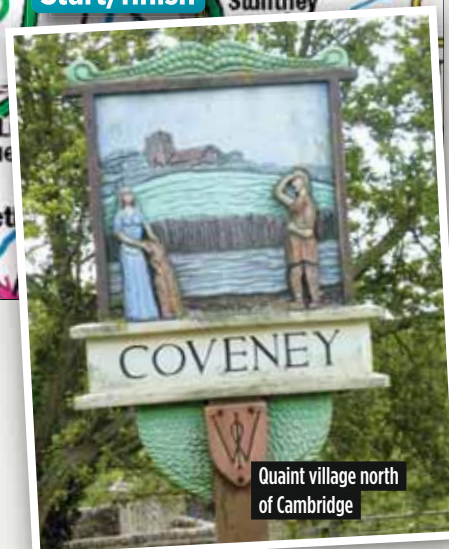




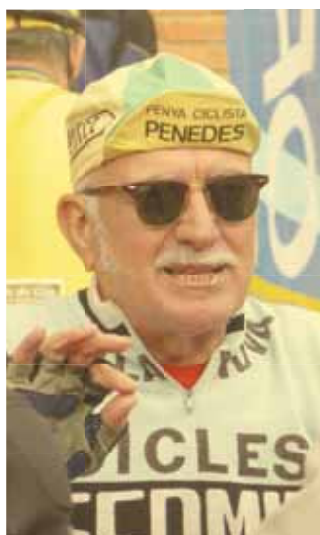
## ROAD BOOK

Head to the city centre from the station. Bear left into Silver Street, left into St Mary's Street, then immediately right into Cromwell Road. First right into Chiefs Street then left into West Fen Road. Follow to Coveney. Continue to Wardy Hill and Mepal. Turn right

onto the A142. Left into Langwood Hill Drove then take Honey Bridge over the Sixteen Foot Drain and follow grass-track then tarmac to Wimblington. Continue to March. Turn right onto the B1099, left onto B1098 and right onto B1100. Follow to T-junction. Turn right onto A1101. Turn left into Bell's Drove and left onto Bates's Drove (A1101). Follow to Littleport High Street, where turn right to Ely.







## A H O M A G E T O CATALONIA

**L**a Pedals de Clip — translated from Catalan as ‘clip pedals’ — is a heritage race now firmly established in the annual cycling calendar of north-eastern Spain. It takes place in Catalonia’s wine-producing Penedès region, renowned for its Cava.

The ethos of heritage racing harks back to the ‘heroic’ days when blood, sweat and sheer determination counted for more than the bank-busting technology and modern day Formula One levels of support and back-up teams.

Qualification for entering these wonderful events is a pre-1987 steel bicycle with toe clip pedals, hence La Pedals de Clip, gear shifters on the down tube and brake cables coming out of the top of the brake levers. And most participants throw themselves into the spirit of the event and dress in period garb.

### Language no barrier

While it is a race, the focus is to complete the course and enjoy yourself. I was definitely up for that. After our usual dismal winter, Spain had obvious attractions for my first vintage ride.

From the retro-styled website I made contact with Carles Soler. Having no Spanish — other than *uno café con leche y brandy, por favor* — never mind Catalan, and Carles, in turn, spoke no English, it wasn’t an auspicious beginning. We pulled it off through dozens of emails. I registered — in Catalan! — and paid my €30 (£22) fee which included €10 for compulsory insurance. I arranged to hire a suitable bicycle for the race for €50, booked flights to Barcelona, three nights’ accommodation and off I went.

I arrived late on Friday night and spent Saturday taking in the sights and sounds of Barcelona, its architecture and street theatre, its cafe culture and numerous tourist attractions. I was impressed with the city’s cycling infrastructure — wide and well-maintained cycle lanes. It has its equivalent of London’s Boris bikes that allow residents unlimited use of the ubiquitous red-and-white Bicing branded bicycles for €47 a year.

### Warm welcome

On Sunday I rose at the dark and uncivil hour of 5.30am — who goes to Spain for a break and gets up at half-five? On the Metro to Plaça de Catalunya I mingled with glassy-eyed party animals meekly making their way home. From there, I had an hour-long train journey to Vilafranca del Penedès, where Carles had arranged for a taxi. Finally, I arrived at Sant Martí Sarroca, the home of La Pedals de Clip.

I think Carles had put the word around that there would be one among them who they would not understand. I felt I had been discovered by two smiling female volunteers and soon I was introduced to Gemma, a final-year student at Barcelona University, who spoke impeccable English — to my great relief.

Then I met Carles, a tall, broad man with the seasoned tan of years on the roads. He was brusque and welcoming. Through Gemma he ascertained that all the arrangements had gone smoothly for me and then he was off to organise some more. Gemma became my surrogate daughter for the day and looked after me before and after the race.

### Laid-back start

Imperceptibly, the numbers of smiling and laughing cyclists grew, pride in their aged heroic racers clearly evident. The bikes were touched and looked at and photographed and cyclists young and old, spouses, children and spectators oohed and aahed in admiration at the kaleidoscope of polished steel.

The riders were mostly male and mature. Some had cultivated a great bushy moustache for the occasion and others sported a novelty stick-on

**“It had the bizarre look of a spaghetti western — all that was needed was a tolling bell”**







Perfect day for a cycle in the country



There were many distractions en route

## From the bustle of Barcelona to the beautiful landscape that underpins Cava, *Keith Elliott* checks out a vintage cycle race oozing with Spanish charm

Words and photos Keith Elliott



Rainbow nation: competitors gather at the start

alternative. They wore traditional cycling caps with upturned peaks and the knitted jerseys of a bygone age: Bianchi, Bertolin, Zanotto, Legaali, Clément...

Carles stood on a wooden barrel — wine, no doubt — with a starting pistol. He was evidently inspiring the assemblage in his gravelly Catalan. We began shuffling forward. A palpable nervousness crept around us. Loved ones reluctantly drifted off to the footpaths.

At ten past nine Carles began a countdown to the nine o'clock start. There was a loud bang and the front cyclists surged forward only to be hauled back by those behind who realised the bang had been some unfortunate participant's tyre and not the starting pistol.

Howls of good-natured laughter still ringing, the pistol went off seconds later and almost 300 cyclists set off on La Pedals de Clip. There were two routes and I had signed up for the longer 72km one.

### Continental shift

The pace was brisk but still allowed for laughter and banter. The route alternated between pristine tarmac and potholed dusty dirt tracks littered with sharp stones for the unwary; and there were a few. I was alarmed at the number of breakdown casualties in the early stages and convinced myself that the same fate was bound to be in store for me.

As we jockeyed for position, bunching suddenly at unexpected turns and road hazards, I induced a couple of front-wheel skids and ended up against the hedge a couple of times, but thankfully not off my bike. Then I remembered that on the Continent the brakes are reversed — left lever front brake, right lever rear brake.

After that, things were almost incident-free and I could enjoy the ride through the Penedès countryside. We passed through small sleepy villages and swathes of vineyards. The Catalan sun was tempered by light cloud; a perfect day for cycling.

The first rest stop was on a low rise, deep in the countryside at a tired-looking two-storey villa by a remote crossroads. On a first-floor balcony, two women waved and laughed at the assembled posse below. It had the bizarre look of a spaghetti western. The only thing missing was an ominously tolling church bell to warn terrified villagers of approaching desperados. There was, however, a novelty air-horn and when it sounded we were off again.

I was somewhere around the middle of the field. Whenever the lengthening chain of cyclists seemed to stretch forever before me I glanced behind to reassure myself that I was doing alright. It was an





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impressive sight. The occasional cluster of spectators and villagers cheered us on as morning rolled towards noon.

### Time for lunch

At the village of Pacs we came upon a road sign for Torres, arguably the pre-eminent wine producer in Spain and owner of the country's largest winery. I wondered momentarily if just maybe...

We swept almost gracefully along the avenue into the large paved car park in front of the unassuming Torres establishment. Then, grace dispensed with, many dozens of heroic bicycles were hastily discarded. Tables were laid out with large dishes of bruschetta, plates of cheese and ham and deep bowls of crisps. Inside a white gazebo in the centre of the car park, phalanxes of polished wine glasses awaited us. Black-uniformed attendants filled and refilled glasses, and replenished the food tables for almost an hour.

There was a carnival atmosphere as riders mingled and met up with old friends and made new ones. A radio reporter flitted like a bee around the participants and interviewed the VIP riders — national champions and heroes of the era we were celebrating. Language barrier or not, it was impossible not to get caught up in it all.

### Hungry for success

Alas, it had to end and we drifted back to our steeds. Buoyed by the 'refreshment' break I was determined to remain with the lead group as we set off. The joviality was not as obvious as we left Bodega Torres behind. It could have been tiredness setting in or that I was now mixing it with the lead peloton, who were obviously of a more competitive bent. Pretty soon I was being tested.

I lagged on the uphill and made ground again on the flat. Where I slipped up was taking it easy on the downhill. It soon became obvious that to stay ahead you had to ride all of the stages and keep the momentum going. The salt from the crisps at Bodega Torres was playing havoc with my lips and my water bottle was running very low.

I rounded a 90° right-hand bend on the narrow road and skimmed past a dead snake by the verge. It

was about a metre long and fatter than I would have expected. I expect the unfortunate creature had been hit by one of the first riders as it tried to negotiate the usually quiet road on a warm Sunday afternoon.

There were about 30 riders ahead of me, stretching their lead. I pressed on ever determined and even picked off the occasional straggler myself. I discovered timing was all-important. I learned to stay in the slipstream and choose the best moment to break out so that the person you passed didn't slip in behind and do the same thing on you. Having said that, I didn't always choose the right moment.

We hit a series of sharp uphill bends. I strained to keep going while others seemingly came from nowhere and zipped past me infused with energy and to boisterous cheers. I rounded the base of an ancient castle and saw the fat, inflated blue Orbea arch 50 metres ahead above the finish line. I smiled, but I'm not sure if it reached my face.

### Cava o'clock

The finishers gathered at the back of Sant Martí Sarroca's landmark castle. Carles was still organising on the prize-giving stage and announced something that included my name and people cheered. More food and drinks were laid on, this time by the locals, just as tasty and just as welcome as Torres. I gulped several cups of soft drinks before happily receiving some Cava, well-earned as far as I was concerned.

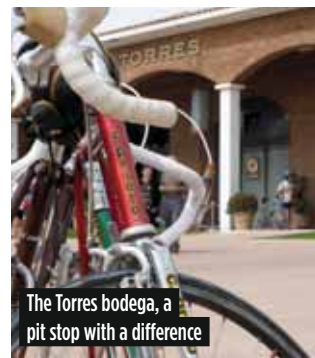
Brooks had a promotional stand along with half a dozen local companies. I browsed displays and products and received handshakes, shoulder-claps and smiles from people making me feel very welcome. One participant even gave me his well-worn and sweaty cycling cap — it really is the thought that counts and I was overjoyed at the warmth of the Catalan people.

Gemma sought me out and checked all was well. We had a glass (albeit plastic, but it did have a stem) of Cava and watched the prize-giving. And then it was over.

Carles asked through Gemma if I would join him and his group for a meal. Though tempted, I decided that I had taken up enough of their time and after handing back my rented bike I bid a fond farewell to my new-found friends. **End**

## Did you know?

The national day of Catalonia is on September 11 and is commonly called *La Diada*



The Torres bodega, a pit stop with a difference



Trying to keep up in tandem



A tried and tested protein drink



Legs eleven: it's bingo for this bunch

## Keeping it retro
















There are numerous retro sportives at home and further afield. In Lancashire, the Pendle Witches Vintage Velo takes place on April 5. L'Eroica Britannia — inspired by the original retro event, L'Eroica, established in Italy 1997 — debuted last year in the Peak District National Park with a three-day festival extravaganza and this year's ride will be on June 21. For a more exotic destination, a similar inspiration has given rise to L'Eroica Japan, with its backdrop of Mount Fuji, which will be on May 17. Closer to home the annual Retro Ronde in Belgium tours Flanders over two days starting from Oudenaarde on June 13.



# Things to do March and April

By the time these events happen, spring will have sprung... so get booking!

## Key to regions

 Scotland	 North-East	 East
 N. Ireland	 North-West	 Central
 Ireland	 Yorkshire	 South-East
 Isle of Man	 East Midlands	 South
 Wales	 West Midlands	 South-West



Photos: Rupert Fowler, Chris Catchpole, Phil O'Connor

## Feeling Moorish?

If you're sitting, pondering a new challenge this year check out the upcoming Adventure X and don't let a fear of the unknown put you off entering.

First up in the annual sportive series is the Moors and Shores Adventure Cross, which takes place on Sunday April 12 at the Forestry Commission Visitor Centre in Dalby Forest.

Entry costs £25, with two challenging but manageable routes in the form of the Mini Massif at 45 miles, and the Massif at 60 miles.

This is a unique series of events but if you're worried about the off-road element, don't be. Regular riders can be seen using a range of bikes from hybrids, to hardtail mountain bikes and cyclo-crossers.

Think forests, moors, coastline and short but steep climbs and the chance to take in the lesser explored area of the North York Moors

National Park. If you are new to Adventure Cross then this is the event to set you rolling on and off-road. And there's plenty more to follow, up and down the country.

[www.bookmyride.co.uk](http://www.bookmyride.co.uk)

### Talking Cobblers!

With so many extreme challenges around, the Ordnance Survey Cobbler Classic stands out as offering something for everyone. Whether this will be your first foray into sportives for 2015, or you've been at it all winter there's a distance to suit you. The challenging but perfectly do-able 43-mile option promises no toughies when it comes to hills.

With that in mind you may want to up your distance to the 64, or even Epic 74-miler. Then again, you could just meander round and have more time to eat cake at the finish.

Taking place on Sunday March 22 at Turweston Aerodrome, Brackley, entries start at £23 and the best part is kids (accompanied by a paying adult) ride for free. And don't despair, the 'cobblers' refers to the famous shoemaking industry of Northamptonshire!

[www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk](http://www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk)

## Sportive checklist

### Don't forget to take with you...

- ☐ Energy gels
- ☐ A piece of fruit or cereal bar
- ☐ Drinking bottles x 2
- ☐ Spare inner tubes x 2
- ☐ Puncture repair sticky patches
- ☐ Tyre levers
- ☐ Multi-tool
- ☐ Mini pump
- ☐ Cape or packable waterproof

### Cycle the Cyclone

The delights of the Surrey Hills attract riders from miles around and on Sunday March 29 you can choose from three routes that take in the best scenery and quiet roads on offer.

From the epic 87 miles, to the standard 61 and the 'short' 42 miles there's a route to challenge every level of rider.

Entry costs £25 and the Cyclone pedals out from Friends Life, Dorking.

[www.bookmyride.co.uk](http://www.bookmyride.co.uk)



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#### SUNDAY MARCH 1

### **E** NORFOLK CSUK WINTER MINI SERIES 5

HQ Helledon Parish Hall, Low Road,

Helleson, NR6 5AE

How far 25/50 miles

Entry £5

CA says The finale of their winter mini series, these stripped back events won't have feed stations or goody bags but they are fully signed with mechanical back up. And, don't worry, they've got the most important thing — cake. Tea,

coffee and hot chocolate will all be waiting to warm you up after the ride, to wash down those homemade delicacies.  
www.cyclesportivesuk.co.uk

### **EM** LEICESTERSHIRE CTC SULLY CHALLENGE RIDES

HQ Wycliffe Rooms, George Street,

Lutterworth, LE17 4ED

How far 32/50/70/100km

Entry £4

CA says Held in memory of cyclist David

Sully these routes start just south of Leicester in Lutterworth and take in some roads that David enjoyed to ride. Although this not a typical sportive the routes are all signed and it is open for anyone who fancies taking in the lanes around Leicestershire.  
www.ctclr.org.uk

### **SE** SURREY JOANNA ROWSELL RIDEOUT

HQ Wotton Park Hotel, Dorking, RH5

6HS

How far 40 miles

Entry £400

CA says Ever fancied riding with the stars of the road? Well now you can and it will set you back just £400. The ride with Joanna Rowsell will head out around Surrey taking in some of its well-known hills. There will be a lunch to look forward to after — just the ticket after a good ride. Places are limited.  
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Yorkshire is a safe bet for punchy climbs

## SE EAST SUSSEX PUNCHEUR

HQ Ditchling Pavilion, BN1 8TY

How far 65 miles

Entry £25

**CA says** It might only be March but this event takes no prisoners with a summit finish bringing you to the end of 65-miles of riding. While it may be a hard slog, the summit of Ditchling Beacon (the third-highest in the South Downs) will be a super finish providing you with some stunning views.

[@puncheursportif](#)

[www.puncheur.co.uk](http://www.puncheur.co.uk)

CF/FS/ET/EM

## SE WEST SUSSEX SOUTH DOWNS STING CX SPORTIVE

HQ Duncton Pavillion, Duncton, West Sussex, GU28 0JY

How far 40/60/80km

Entry £20/£24

**CA says** You'll need a cyclo-cross bike for this one as you'll be heading off-road taking on farm tracks and bridleways over the South Downs. Good news is (or maybe it's bad) that 60 per cent of the routes are over tarmac road.

MARCH 6-12

## SW DEVON DARTMOOR CYCLING CAMP

HQ Sherill Farm Holiday Cottages, PL19 0QP

How far Various

Entry £695

**CA says** It's a whole week of cycling. What could be better? If you struggle to get motivated, especially after the winter months, it could be the perfect antidote to get you back in the saddle. They are designed for the sportive cyclists and as well as lead rides have residential experts taking skills sessions and seminars, all in the heart of Dartmoor National Park.

[@JustEventsLtd](#)

[www.Dartmoor.biz](http://www.Dartmoor.biz)

CF/FS/EM

SUNDAY MARCH 8

## Y YORKSHIRE 65 ROSES SPRING CLASSIC

HQ Dorothy Hyman Sports Centre,

Cudworth, S72 8LH

How far 48/68 miles

Entry £25

**CA says** It's Spring Classic time! The pro riders are getting ready to take on races that include cobbled sections and you can too as sportive organisers embrace this style of event. Both routes will, as well as taking in roads, include pavé, or cobbled sections, making it a very different ride from the usual sportive. [www.65Roses-SpringClassic.co.uk](http://www.65Roses-SpringClassic.co.uk)

CF/FS/ATC/EM

## C GLOUCESTERSHIRE PERFORMANCE CYCLES WINTER MINI-SPORTIVE SERIES (6 OF 6)

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[www.cycleplan.co.uk/ev](http://www.cycleplan.co.uk/ev)

How far 45/65 miles

Entry £8.50

**CA says** The last in their series of winter rides meaning spring is just around the corner. If you've not headed out to ride one of the events then why not make your way over to Gloucestershire? With a 45 and 65-mile route to choose from it could kick start your cycling season. [www.performancecycles.co.uk/mini](http://www.performancecycles.co.uk/mini)

## NW CHESHIRE POLOCINI WINTER SPRINTER

HQ The Woodford Centre, Woodford, Cheshire, SK7 1PS

How far 32/63 miles

Entry £15/£20

**CA says** "It's not a winter sprinter without some cobbles" according to the guys at Polocini. But don't worry too much — there's only one section here for you to get over, and while that may be tough, the route is mostly flat around the Cheshire lanes. Aside from the pave, grab some free grub — porridge pre ride and a post ride snack from Masterchef finalist Jackie Kearney.

[@polocini](#)

[www.polocini.com](http://www.polocini.com)

CF/FS/EM



The Wiltshire Wildcat takes place on March 14

Don't forget a change of clothes — it could be a muddy one!  
www.southernssportive.com  
CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

## **SE SURREY** **THE SURREY RUMBLE**

HQ Cobham Village Hall, Lushington Drive, KT11 2 LU

How far 61/81 miles

Entry £17

**CA says** This is Twickenham Cycling Club's annual sportive that will start from Cobham making a loop around Guildford. The Surrey Hills will test your legs as the route heads through Cranleigh and drops south through Ellen's Green and Rudgewick. You will make your way back to HQ through Puttenham and Woking.  
www.twickenhamcc.co.uk/tcc/surrey-rumble/

## **SE KENT** **THE VO2 SPORTIVE**

HQ VO2 Cycling Ltd, The Walled Garden, Hildenborough, TN11 8ND

How far 30/65/120km

Entry £25

**CA says** We're back down south again for

this one that follows routes around Kent and Sussex. They will take in Knole Park in Sevenoaks and enter the Weald and also head through Ashdown Forest. There will be a few good climbs in there too, to keep the legs warm, including Hubbards Hill, Ide Hill and Shipbourne Hill.

@vo2cycling

www.thevo2sportive.co.uk

CF/FS/ET/EM

## **C HERTFORDSHIRE** **WARES CAMBRIDGE?**

HQ Allenburys Sports and Social Club, Ware, SG12 0DJ

How far 30/65/120km

Entry £18/£20

**CA says** The full route here will have participants pedalling up to Cambridge from Ware in Hertfordshire. Sounds a long way? No worries, there are also 30 and 50 mile routes that take on the rolling and quiet lanes around the county of Hertfordshire. If you live nearby why not venture out and get a few miles under your belt. We like the punning name, too, naturally!

@Sportive\_UK

www.sportiveuk.co.uk

CF/FS/ET/EM

## **SATURDAY MARCH 14**

### **S WILTSHIRE** **WILTSHIRE WILD CAT**

HQ Salisbury Racecourse, Wiltshire, SP2 8PN

How far 34/62/80 miles

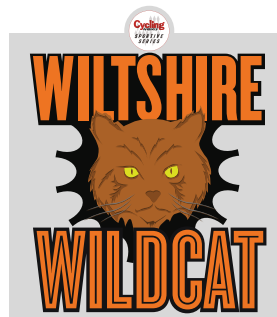
Entry £25/£35

**CA says** This is the first of our sister magazine's, *Cycling Weekly*, road sportive series. It will take in the medieval Drovers trails and Saxon villages around Wiltshire and north Dorset, and there are three route choices: 34, 62 or 80 miles. The toughest climb will be up on to Ashmore Down before dropping back down to the River Stour valley. The racecourse, where the routes start and finish, sits atop of a hill so save some energy for the final few miles.

@cyclingweekly

www.bookmyride.co.uk

CF/FS/EOL/ET/EM



## **SUNDAY MARCH 15**

### **WM SHROPSHIRE** **THE SHROPSHIRE DEVIL**

HQ Minsterley Community Centre, Minsterley, SY5 0BZ

How far 48/80 miles

Entry £25

**CA says** This should blow away the winter cobwebs with 1,253 metres of total climbing on the short route and 2,857 on the long route, which is 80 miles long. Most of this will be clocked up on the Shropshire Hills with both routes taking in Long Mountain and Stiperstones. Riders also head out to traverse the Welsh border.

www.redkiteevents.co.uk

FS/ET/EM

### **W WALES** **TORELLI JODRELL BANK** **CLASSIC SPORTIVE**

HQ Poynton Leisure Centre, Poynton, SK12 1PU

How far 26/50/80 miles

Entry £22.50/£27.50

**CA says** Jodrell Bank Telescope will dominate the landscape on this ride around the Cheshire Plains. The start of all three routes — 26, 50 or 80 miles — will be fast and flat so you can warm the legs up for the lumps and bumps to come. The Pott Shrigley climb, with its steady gradient, is the challenge all riders take on before hitting the finish line — at the top there's a great view over the county.

@TeamTorelli

tinyurl.com/lznr5tb

CF/FS/ET/EM

## **SATURDAY MARCH 21**

### **SE KENT** **THE COMPACT 50**

HQ Cobham Village Hall, Cobham, KT11 2LU

How far 56 miles

Entry £25

**CA says** A nice one to ease you into the new season. This 56-mile route has 1,494 metres of total climbing which include some famous Surrey Hills like Leith Hill, Coldharbour and Ranmore. This forms part of the Surrey Double Header weekend with The Spring Onion sportive taking place the following day. Why not enter both?

www.5034events.co.uk

CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

## **SUNDAY MARCH 22**

### **SW SOMERSET** **GRAND TOUR SOMERSET** **SPORTIVE**

HQ North Curry Primary School, North Curry, TA3 6NQ

How far 85/102 miles

Entry £25

**CA says** Heading to Somerset for this one. Both the 85 and 102-mile routes will have riders tackling the Mendips Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Quantock hills and the moors of Exmoor. This is not one for the feint hearted especially as it saves the climb up on to Blackdowns for the end. This will really put your winter training to the test.

tinyurl.com/nptpvb4

CF/FS/EM

### **S WILTSHIRE** **LIONHEART SPORTIVE**

HQ Longleat, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 7NW

How far 62/100 miles

Entry £40/£42

**CA says** Once you've pedalled past the safari animals of Longleat you will head out onto the roads of Wiltshire taking in the vale of Batcombe. There will be a timed section on King Alfred's Tower at the 35-mile mark so you might want to hunker down and focus on the road rather than the scenery on that section. You never know you just might be king or queen of the mountain.

@HumanRaceEvents

www.humanrace.co.uk/cycling

FS/ET/EM

### **C NORTHAMPTONSHIRE** **ORDNANCE SURVEY** **COBBLER CLASSIC**

HQ Turweston Aerodrome, Westbury, Brackley, NN13 5YD

How far 43/64/74 miles

Entry £18/£30

**CA says** With no significant hills around Northamptonshire this looks set to be a nice rolling course, easing you into the 2015 season gently. You should also be able to set a pretty good pace on nice long roads that stretch through the quiet countryside.

@ukcyclingevents

www.ukcyclingevents.co.uk

CF/FS/EOL/ET/EM





## SUNDAY MARCH 22

**S** BERKSHIRE  
**THE BLACK LEGEND**  
**SPORTIVE**

HQ John O'Gaunt School, Hungerford, RG17 0AN

How far 45/56/80 miles

Entry £25/£27/£29

CA says A brand new event for this year, this sportive is based around a tale of murder and forbidden love set on the highest hill on the Wiltshire/Berkshire border. The event, that weaves its way through the North Wessex Downs, will take in the infamous climb and head through Lambourn and over the picturesque Marlborough Downs. [www.purplepatchrunning.com](http://www.purplepatchrunning.com) FS/ET

**SE** KENT  
**THE SPRING ONION**

HQ Cobham Village Hall Lushington Drive, KT11 2LU

How far 65 miles

Entry £25 – early Bird

CA says This is the second part of the Surrey Double Header weekend. In only 65 miles you will tackle 1,526 metres of total climbing – no wonder with the likes of Leith Hill, Coombe Bottom and the North Downs making an appearance. If you live nearby why not head out and test your early season fitness.

[www.5034events.co.uk](http://www.5034events.co.uk)

CF/FS/ET/ATC/EM

## SUNDAY MARCH 29

**SW** DEVON  
**HALDON HEROIC - CX**  
**SPORTIVE**

HQ Stover School, TQ12 6QG

How far 13/46/59 miles

Entry £37

CA says Here's one for those of you with a cross bike. While the routes are not timed there are three forest sections on each route that will be. Ranging between 1.8 miles and 8 miles the various sections are ideal for those with a competitive streak. There'll be tracks, bridleways and roads giving you a real mix of riding terrain.

[@JustEventsLtd](https://twitter.com/JustEventsLtd)

[www.HaldonHeroic.co.uk](http://www.HaldonHeroic.co.uk)

FS/EM

**Y** YORKSHIRE  
**NIDDERDALE SPORTIVE**

HQ Dacre Banks, Dacre Harrogate, HG3 4ES

How far 65/85 miles

Entry £25

CA says If you haven't yet ridden some of the roads that the 2014 Tour ventured over, then why not head to Yorkshire and take some on. You can choose from 65 or 85 miles with 6,000 and 8,000ft of climbing respectively, so make sure you've put the time into a few prior hill efforts. Back at HQ a traditional pork pie and mushy peas will be waiting for you. [www.functionalfitnesssevents.co.uk](http://www.functionalfitnesssevents.co.uk) CF/FS/ET/EM

**SE** SURREY  
**SURREY HILLS CYCLONE**

HQ Friends Life, Dorking, RH4 1QA

How far 28/61/87 miles

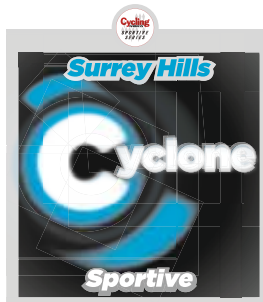
Entry £25/£35

CA says A testing sportive for this time of year as the routes take on some tough Surrey climbs. Even the short route takes on the 20 per cent gradient of White Down. If you're up for taking on the longer distances then Leith Hill and Barhatch will be waiting for you too. Don't forget your climbing legs.

[@cyclingweekly](https://twitter.com/cyclingweekly)

[www.bookmyride.co.uk](http://www.bookmyride.co.uk)

CF/FS/EOL/ET/EM

**S** WILTSHIRE  
**THE JOKER**

HQ Salisbury Racecourse, Netherhampton, SP2 8TN

How far 60/150km

Entry £28/£30

CA says With April Fool's day just around the corner, this sportive will be playing 'jokes' on you at most turns. But will they be funny? There will be optional challenges, should you wish to choose them, that are built around hills and other sections. But, if you dare to take a short cut The Joker could punish you for it. Cobbles and off-road sections have been known to face riders in past editions – hilarious!

[@cyclosportive](https://twitter.com/cyclosportive)

[www.southernsportive.com](http://www.southernsportive.com)

FS/ET/ATC/EM

## FRIDAY APRIL 3

**SE** KENT  
**THE GOOD FRIDAY**  
**SPORTIVE**

HQ Folkestone Rugby Club, Kent, CT18 8BH

How far 38/74/100 miles

Entry £22/£28

CA says iCycle events are new to the calendar and they are kicking their events off with this Good Friday sportive. The routes travel around Kent taking in the uphill struggle of the Devil's Kneading Trough, which offers breathtaking views across the Kent Weald. Riders will pedal through the haunted village of Pluckley and skirt the coast near Hythe.

[www.icycleevents.co.uk](http://www.icycleevents.co.uk)

CF/FS/ET/EM

## SUNDAY APRIL 5

**Y** YORKSHIRE  
**BLUE GIRAFFE BICYCLES**  
**NORTH YORK MOORS SPRING**  
**CLASSIC**

HQ Stokesley Town Hall TS9 5DG

How far 30/56 miles

Entry £15/£20

CA says The first of the Blue Giraffe series will head out around the moors of North Yorkshire. There won't be much of a warm up as after just a few miles participants will take on Carlton Bank. It's then onto Newgate bank to Helmsley for a nice flat section to spin the legs out. But don't get too comfortable, the hills keep coming as the route leads you onto the top of the moors. The short route is mostly flat so if you're not in for lots of climbing that's the one for you.

[@bluegiraffel](https://twitter.com/bluegiraffel)

[www.bluegiraffebicycles.co.uk](http://www.bluegiraffebicycles.co.uk)

CF/FS/EM

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[www.cycleplan.co.uk/ev](http://www.cycleplan.co.uk/ev)

HQ The Craven Heifer Public House, Rawtenstall, BB48LA

How far 13/56 miles

Entry £6.95/£16/95

CA says The Pendle Witches Vintage Velo is a favourite for those who enjoy steel bikes and traditional wool kit but modern cycles and Lycra lovers are welcome too. The routes take on Lancashire moorland with riders meandering through the Ribble Valley and taking on the Trough of Bowland. [www.pendlewitchesvintagevelo.co.uk](http://www.pendlewitchesvintagevelo.co.uk) FS/ATC/EM

**C** NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
**THE QUATTRO SPORTIVE**

HQ Cogenhoe Football Club, Brafield Road, NN7 1ND

How far 52/75/84 miles

Entry £25/£27/£29

CA says This event is so called as it travels through four counties: Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, if you are taking on the full 84-mile route. All routes will travel on rural roads, through picturesque villages including Newton Blossomville, Kimbolton and Harrold. [www.justracinguk.com/event/2014/quattro-sportive-0](http://www.justracinguk.com/event/2014/quattro-sportive-0) FS/EM



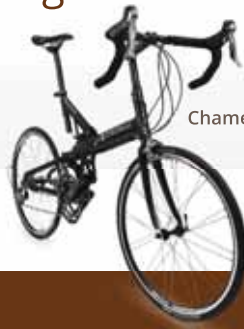
The Surrey Hills Cyclone draws huge crowds

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# Your turn

## Convert to computer aided riding

One cyclist is introduced to the addictive world of number crunching

**I** like my cycling like I like my life: clean, tidy, and uncluttered without distractions. And so as I tap out the first few lines of this article, my bike is uncluttered, free from any computers and their bulky unsightly sensors. I'm the first to admit that I have a slightly obsessive compulsive personality, bordering just south of a disorder, so it's a conscious decision that I've made. No continual monitoring of my parameters, heart rate, cadence, temperature and a multitude of other available information. Distractions are a bad thing for me, so it's just me, my bike and the road.

I call it riding MINIMUS...

Saying all that though, I do, of course, ride with my mobile stashed away in my jersey pocket, running one of the popular free apps, and when I get home I enjoy looking at my stats. Actually that's not quite true, I love looking at my stats, but the info is limited and I always feel that OCD hunger for more info, more, more, more.

So I now find myself facing the biggest dilemma of my cycling life — to compute or not to compute.

It's not a decision that I'm taking lightly. It could possibly ruin the beautiful relationship that I have with my cycling.

But maybe there's something to be gained from all that extra info I will have. Maybe there's something that I'm not quite understanding, after all, all the pros ride with some type of monitoring device on their bikes.

It's been a couple of months since I started toying with the idea of getting a computer, and my indecision is starting to drive me, and my wife, up the wall. It's time to poo or get off the potty. So I'm taking a last ride out to decide, just me and my love, my Moda. We are going to have a final and serious talk about it and decide whether to bring a third party into our relationship — a ménage à trois so to speak.

And just like that it's done, decision made, and

OCD is now well and truly in the driving seat. An all singing, all dancing GPS model with a heart-rate monitor and maps (that I think I'll never use) is on order for next day delivery. I've downloaded the app, set up an account, all before the 'buy' icon has gone cold.

So it's done, the next ride out will be that three-way I always wanted, and the excitement is just too much to bear. I'm going from MINIMUS to... MAXIMUS.

### Riding to the max

For all you other minimalists out there, all you bicycle computer sceptics, I have only one thing to say to you. You have no idea what you are missing, you have no idea what this piece of kit will do for your cycling. My overall fitness has taken a leap forward thanks to this piece of technology. I always thought I was pushing hard, but you never really know until you have some way to monitor it, and that's what it's all about at the end of the day, just how hard am I pushing myself.

My first ride out with this bad boy and I'm busting every time I've ever posted. I kid you not I'm in the zone, literally, HR zone 5-6

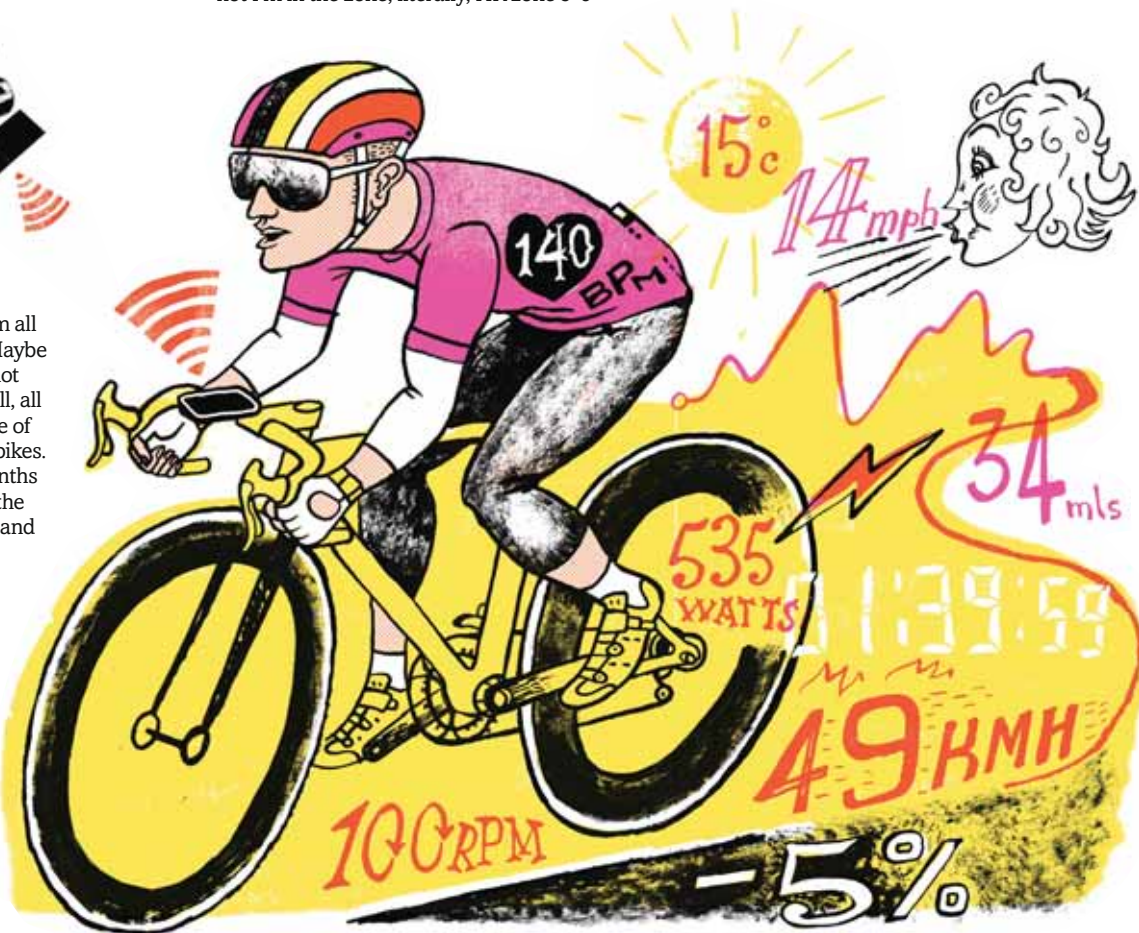
up my favourite climb, which believe it or not is the one in the advertisement for this particular model. I wonder if I'll see Dan Martin, or David Millar out today.

Then there's the freedom of exploration it gives you. You may well argue, "well I always ride the same roads I don't need navigation", but that's my point — do yourself a favour and get a new cycling life. Ride down to your local train station, buy a ticket to a remote, undiscovered destination, and ride home with confidence. It's as simple as that.

So has riding MAXIMUS broken the beautiful relationship that I had with my cycling? Has OCD taken control of my soul? I have to say a big no. I am now experiencing a far deeper, more rewarding and more fulfilling relationship with my cycling, a relationship that I had thought was perfect.

Is the next step a power meter? Or would that be just too much information?

*Shaun Paul Beevor is 43. He has always enjoyed writing, and has been cycling two years. He likes hills, Lycra and warm weather, which is why he moved to Spain.*



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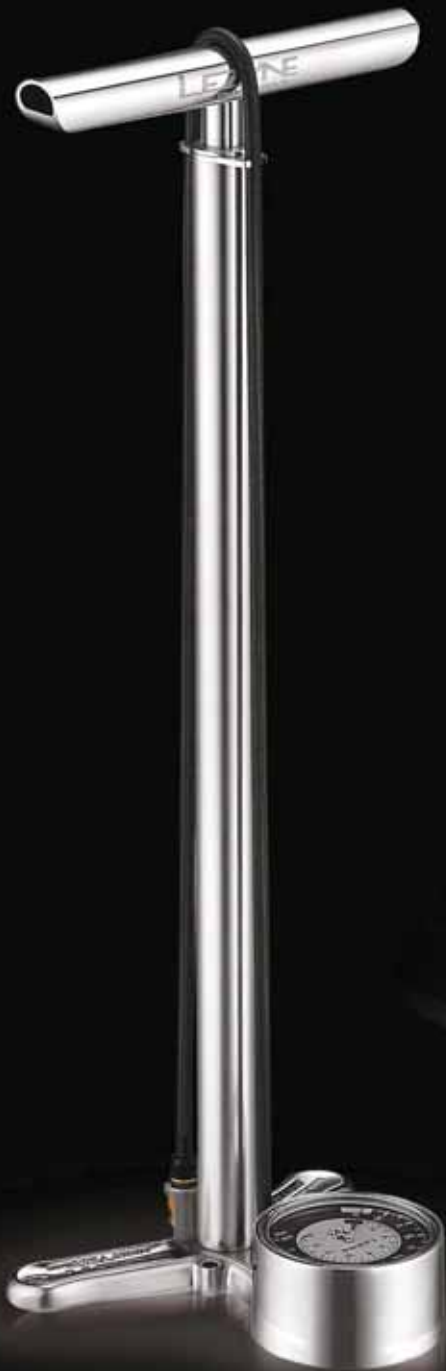
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